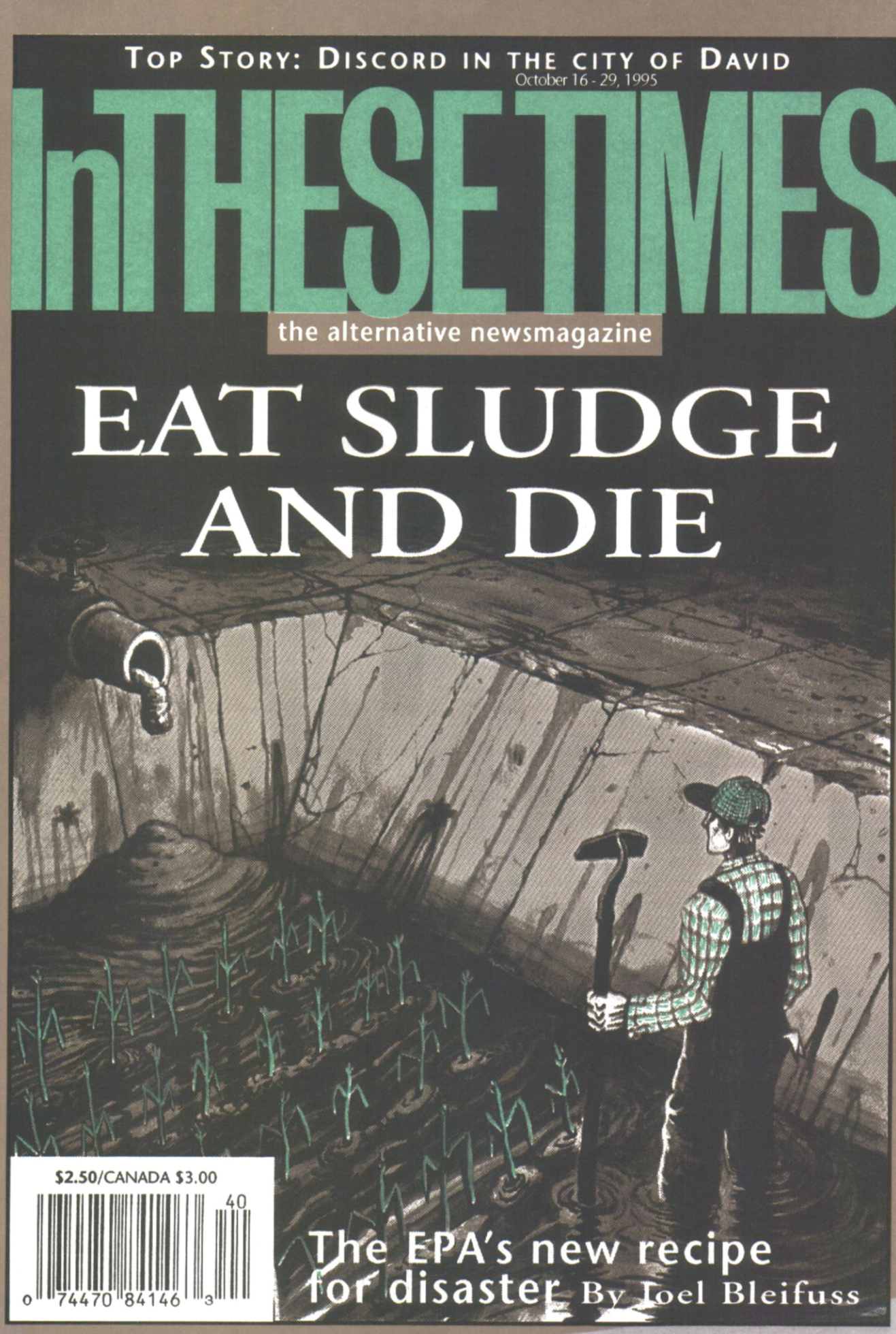
TOP STORY: DISCORD IN THE CITY OF DAVID

October 16 - 29, 1995

In THESE TIMES

the alternative newsmagazine

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The EPA's new recipe for disaster By Joel Bleifuss

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EDITORIAL

THE DEMOCRATS' DILEMMA

Ever since the New Deal, the Democratic Party's strength has been based on an implicit social compact between big capital, organized labor and African-Americans. In the image it presents to the public, especially at election time, Democrats have painted themselves as the party of working people. And since World War II, this coalition has in fact benefited workers, women and ethnic minorities in many ways—even while leaving their underlying insecurities intact.

In recent years, however, especially between elections, the national leadership of the Democratic Party has taken its social base for granted. And with Clinton in office we have a president who, in the words of the *New York Times*, "has done more for the Fortune 500 than virtually any other president in this century." In making free trade his first priority, the *Times* says, Bill Clinton has shown that he "understands the economic realities of the world in a way no Republican president has." Hyperbole? Yes, but there is no doubt that Clinton and his wing of the party have followed the lead of America's corporate elite in abandoning the compact forged during the Great Depression of the '30s. Nor can there be any doubt where his true loyalty lies.

To understand how and why this has happened, it's necessary to know something about the conditions under which the so-called welfare state developed, and how the Democrats became its political representative. Early in this century, as the first wave of giant corporations was consolidating, Progressive reformers and Socialists actively challenged corporate principles and power. Many leading financiers and industrialists understood that their new social order, still in its infancy, was vulnerable to such attacks. Among these businessmen was George W. Perkins, the chief organizer of the International Harvester and United States Steel companies. Perkins argued that he and his colleagues had an urgent need. "If this new order of things is better for capital and better for the consumer," he said, "then in order to succeed permanently it must demonstrate that it is also better for the laborer."

To bring an increasingly divided society together, something had to be done to head off a growing and militant labor movement and a Socialist Party that was rapidly gaining votes. Heeding Perkins' call, a wide array of businessmen, academics and politicians joined together to offer trade union officials a junior partnership in their emerging social order. For some 10 years before the United States entered the First World War, this newly conceived triumvirate of capital, labor and the "public" worked at stabilizing the new corporate order by proposing reforms designed to benefit and pacify working people. Though officially nonpartisan, the initiators of this incipient social compact, including even its labor representatives, were mostly Republicans of the Theodore Roosevelt variety.

However, World War I interrupted these initial efforts at reconciliation, and then the Russian Revolution, the domestic Red Scare and Calvin Coolidge's nostalgic revival of 19th-century laissez-faire liberalism brought the Republican Party firmly back to its traditional small business base—and to its hostility to organized labor. For several years during the "roaring twenties," the fate of working people was hardly on the minds of our business elites. Then came the Great Depression of 1929-1941, and along with it a new upsurge in labor militancy and left-wing political activity. As industrial workers rushed to join the new unions of the CIO and as the Soviet Union rapidly industrialized while the West stagnated, new—though unfounded—fears of revolution echoed through the corridors of power. Suddenly the need to win the loyalty of the working (and unemployed) masses reemerged as a pressing concern. And with Franklin Roosevelt in the White House a new coalition was forged.

In quick succession this New Deal passed reforms that had only been considered in the years prior to World War I. The Wagner Act granted unions the right to organize, and Social Security, unemployment insurance and many other reforms were enacted. Throughout this process, many businessmen railed at Roosevelt as "a traitor to his class," but others, with an understanding that he was saving their system, quietly lined up behind him. After World War II, during years of rapid growth and low unemployment, the New Deal coalition remained intact. But in these years labor also became bureaucratized, and its leadership came to depend more on their access to those in high office than on the activity of their members. And liberals and the left, in their attempts to win reforms, increasingly relied on the courts and lobbying, rather than political action.

By the '80s the New Deal coalition was disintegrating. Unions were weakened as corporations shopped the world for the cheapest labor markets and utilized computerized technology to shed millions of workers in the United States. Meanwhile, financial speculation, with the immediate bottom line the only consideration, became a near-universal principle of business life.

All this is part of the new world order in which business leaders have come to see the social compact as an unnecessary expense. With socialism no longer existing as an alternative force, the capitalist principles of rapacious greed and personal aggrandizement can now flourish. The Republican Party, as the party of small business and the disaffected downwardly

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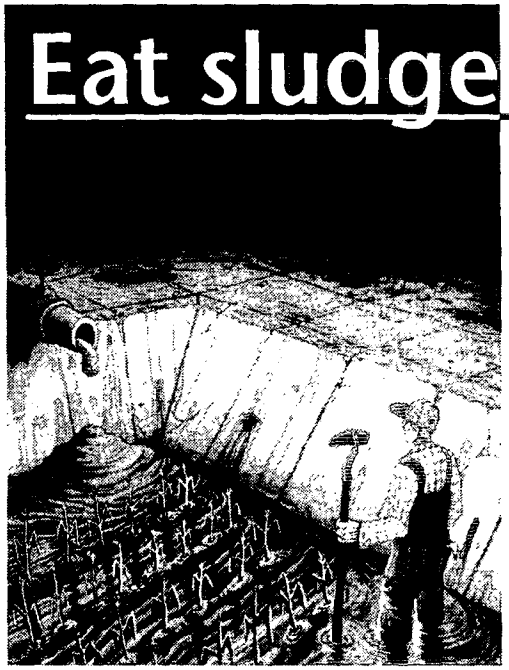
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LETTERS

Alternatives

In his August 21 story "Alternative Inc.," David Armstrong says that "the City Paper cluster in the mid-Atlantic" and the "Midwestern Reader papers" are "among the present-day alternative conglomerates." This is completely incorrect. The Midwestern Readers (Chicago, Twin Cities, Omaha/Lincoln) have no common ownership, nor do the East Coast City Papers (Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia). This is not a small mistake. In a story whose sole point is to expose the chain ownership of alternative weeklies, to expose such ownership where none exists is quite misleading.

Armstrong should know of a case of joint ownership that he omitted: The owners of the *Chicago Reader* also own the *Washington City Paper*.

Jane Levine
Publisher, *Chicago Reader*
Chief Operating Officer,
Washington City Paper

David Armstrong replies: As with any business, the configuration of alternative chains changes all the time. Mea culpa on the present alignment of the various Readers and City Papers, but Levine's complaint notwithstanding, this is indeed a minor error. The Chicago Reader *extended its corporate reach in 1978 by starting the Los* Angeles Reader. *Individual investors from the* Chicago Reader *helped fund and found Berkeley's* East Bay Express *the same year. Baltimore's weekly* City Paper, *once affiliated with the* Washington City Paper, *was sold to the* Scranton Times, *a daily, in 1987, further blurring the distinction between alternative and mainstream. And so on. Most alternative weeklies are in fact conventional businesses, despite their smugly superior rhetoric: That is exactly the point of the "Alternative, Inc." piece.*

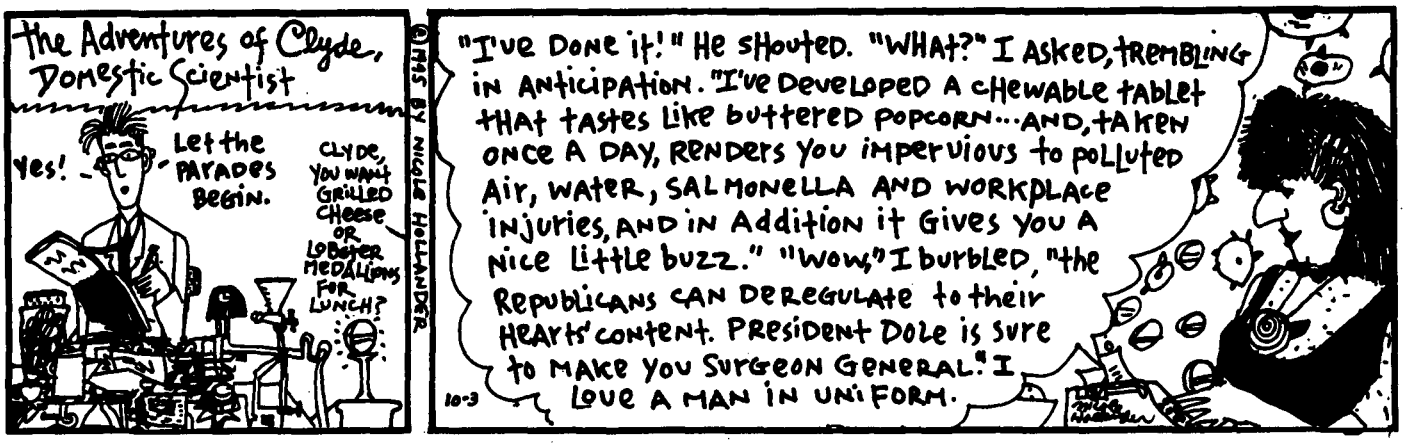
Jews and Cruse

I regard Salim Muwakkil as one of *ITT*'s more insightful and compelling writers, but in the case of his article "A whiter shade of pale" (*ITT*, August 21), I take issue with a few of his comments on Jews and the left.

I am dismayed that Muwakkil is so uncritical of Harold Cruse's 1967 book, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual.* He writes that the author had "expressed concerns about ties between blacks and Jews." Is that all? Cruse's book is, among other things, a diatribe against what he calls "Communist Jews" and "assimilated Jewish American Communists," who used their Jewish "nationalistic aggressiveness" to dominate the black intellectuals who were in or around the Communist Party between the 1930s and the 1960s. Now, there is much to criticize the American Communists for in that period, but Cruse's singling out of Jewish leaders of the party for supposedly not treating black intellectuals as considerately as did the "Anglo-Saxon" leaders is simply bizarre and malevolent.

It is also unrealistic of Muwakkil to say that the Jews who "were rudely ejected from positions of influence within many of the major black organizations [in the Black Power era] ... have yet to return." Return! Would they be welcome today? Besides, the notion of Jews having been in "positions of influence" in groups such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating

SYLVIA — by Nicole Hollander



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Committee (SNCC) grates on the nerves. Did those young Jews not genuinely and wholeheartedly work for SNCC? Weren't there young Jews who did *not* seek influential positions or who, in fact, wanted only to be influenced by their black colleagues?



Insofar as Muwakkil asserts that "progressive whites are disproportionately Jewish," I was stung by his comment that the white left tends to "devalue" the work of W.E.B. Du Bois. I'd say the opposite is true. Many white people came to respect Du Bois by reading left papers such as the *National Guardian* and by attending meetings of left organizations where he was always the most honored speaker and where the audience, especially in New York, included many Jews. If Du Bois had suspected that the "white left" devalued his work would he have selected Herbert Aptheker, a Communist and a Jew, to be his literary executor—the same man who was the object of Cruse's venom?

Sid Resnick
Hamden, Conn.

Jews and Reds

In Salim Muwakkil's "A whiter shade of pale" (*ITT*, August 21), we find these statements: "...progressive whites are disproportionately Jewish" and, "Because Cruse considered the radical left in America an essentially Jewish movement..."

It seems to me that this has long been a somewhat overblown proposition, historically inaccurate and never challenged. I was a member of the Communist Party, the largest left movement of the time, from 1936 through 1957. The party's national leaders were Earl Browder, a Kansas Methodist, followed by William Z. Foster, Eugene Dennis and the current leader, Gus Hall. The top woman Communist was Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and the head of the largest state unit, New York, was Bob Thompson. The two Communists elected to the New York City Council were Benjamin Davis and Peter Cacchione. Nary a one of them was or is Jewish.

When I joined the staff of the *Daily Worker* in 1936, my editor was Clarence Hathaway, a Minnesota Presbyterian. A majority of the editorial staff was Jewish, but probably no more so than the staffs of other New York newspapers. Just off the top of my head I can recall non-Jewish staffers Rob Hall, Art Shields, Harry Raymond, Virginia Gardner, Abner Berry, John Melton, John Hudson Jones, Augusta Strong, Howard Boldt, Eric Bert, Jerry Cook, Roosevelt Ward, Dorothy Robinson and staff cartoonist Fred Ellis. And we did not have a very large staff.

Certainly most party members in New York City were Jewish. The same was probably true of the Democratic Party, as well as the American Labor, Socialist and Liberal parties. When I traveled to Cleveland to cover the World Series in 1954, I attended a party social gathering where the ethnic composition, reflecting the locality, was markedly different from that found in New York. While I have no statistical proof, this was undoubtedly true of other areas.

Furthermore, who were the party's cultural heroes? Paul Robeson, Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie. And going back before the Communist Party's ascendancy on the left, if Mother Jones, Mother Bloor, Eugene Debs, Big Bill Haywood and Norman Thomas were Jewish, it comes as news to me.

What's the point here, beside some respect for historical accuracy? Being Jewish, I take some pride in the fact that fellow Jews were prominent in movements advocating something better than capitalism for this land of ours, and fighting for social justice in the meantime. But I don't want to deprive my non-Jewish fellow radicals of their share of the glory.

Lester Rodney
Walnut Creek, Calif.

Blackout

Salim Muwakkil's critique of the lack of diversity in the left press (*ITT*, August 21) is very much needed, but I would like to add a little more to his analysis. I think most of what he says is right on target. Because most popular left publications tend to focus on issues prominent in the mainstream media, issues and news of what's going on throughout Africa receive very little attention in the left media. While, for example, the focus on Bosnia is very important, the left press has been virtually silent on what is taking place in Angola, Nigeria and, for that matter, South Africa! While some left publications, such as *ITT*, seem to give most of their pages over to a domestic focus, issues concerning the black community also fail to receive much exposure.

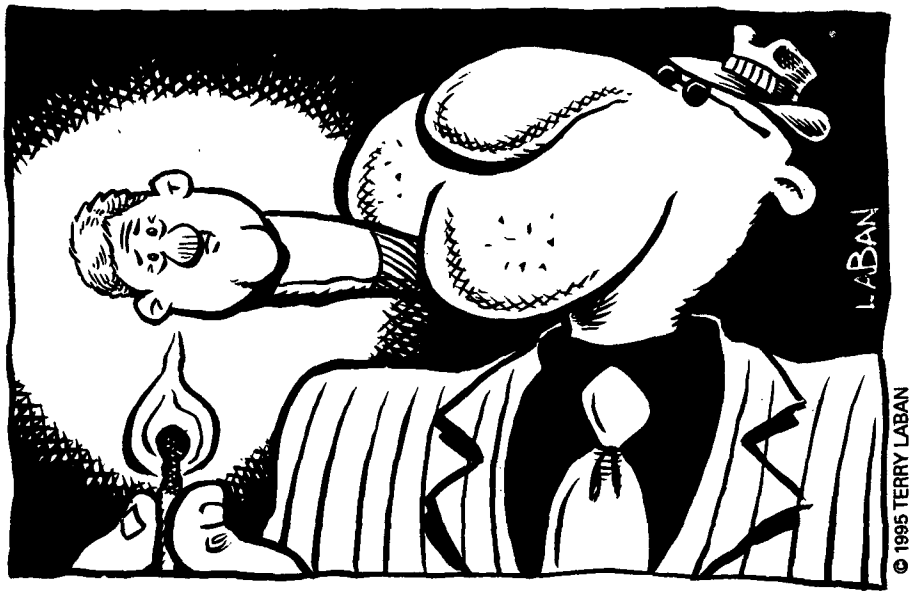
I'm not sure a typical white-managed left publication can really address the needs of the black community. It's really a shame that the black community has not been able to sustain a popular left publication. *Emerge* is hardly left, and while the NOI's *Final Call* (which left editors should read!) does bring out some important issues, it doesn't go far enough in providing the left analysis needed. I guess one could say that a "Crisis of the African Descendant Left" could easily be written these days. For while the left makes references to ideologues such as Gramsci, Foucault and Adorno, few writers and scholar-activists (black or white) seem to have read works by Kwame Nkrumah, Sekou Toure, Walter Rodney or Ngugi wa Thiongo.

The solution, of course, is for the black left to broaden its base, reach out to black students and sustain a publication that is both broad-based and accessible to the general public.

Bakari Chavanu
Sacramento, Calif.

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InSHORT



SMOKE AND MIRRORS

Decrying a "terrible" increase in teenage smoking, President Clinton recently launched a high-profile crusade against youth-oriented tobacco advertising such as R.J. Reynolds' "Joe Camel" campaign. Yet government reports, including one released in September, cast strong doubt on both the factual basis and the motives of the administration's noble attack on teen smoking.

Though officials and the media haven't called much attention to it, the Department of Health and Human Service's 1994 National Household Survey—the only consistent, long-term survey of teenagers and adults to gather information on smoking—shows that over the last 20 years, teens aged 12 to 17 have shown the largest *decrease* in cigarette smoking of any age group. The 1994 figures showed only one in 10 teens smoked at least once in the month before the survey, a decrease of 16 percent since 1990 and 61 percent since 1974.

Research over the past two decades indicates that the main reason teenagers take up smoking is the influence of adults around them who smoke—particularly their parents. Oddly enough, it was health officials in the normally tobacco-friendly Reagan and Bush administrations who laid the groundwork, however tentatively, for addressing the hazards to children posed by adults who smoke. Studies by health agencies in both administrations firmly linked youth and adult smoking, noting that nearly all teen smokers have parents who smoke. In 1992, the Environmental Protection Agency reported that parents who smoke cause and aggravate 350,000 to 1.3 million



Don't leave home without it

Now that it's legal to carry a concealed weapon in Arizona, local residents are trying to do it with style, the *San Francisco Examiner* reports. Marketers are doing a brisk business with discreet gun-toting purses, briefcases and fanny packs. "I think it's a gentleman's way not to be belligerent or outrageous about carrying a gun," one executive says of his disguised holster, designed to look like an executive organizer. "It's something you can carry anywhere with you."



The white stuff

Russian ultranationalist and parliamentary brawler Vladimir Zhirinovsky recently met face to face with his "favorite American politician"—former Nazi-turned-Republican David Duke, the Associated Press reports. "We're nationalists," Duke explained. "And Zhirinovsky is very protective of what you might call the white race."



Family values

A Wal-Mart store in Miami removed a popular T-shirt

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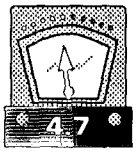
from its shelves because of complaints about its "offensive" message, the Associated Press reports. That message: that someday a woman would be president. "It was determined the T-shirt was offensive to some people, and so the decision was



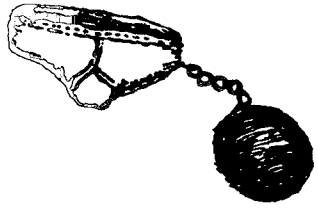
made to pull it from the sales floor," a spokeswoman explained. As it turns out, the presence of the shirts at the Miami store was itself something of a fluke. According to the shirt's creator, psychologist Ann Moliver Ruben, the chain refused to carry the shirt nationwide because its message "goes against Wal-Mart's family values."

Pink and blue

Sheriff Joe Arpaio of Maricopa County, Ariz., is already notorious for his harsh treatment of prisoners in his custody—denying them television, cigarettes and coffee, and



housing some of them in tents under the scorching Arizona sun. Now, London's *Daily Telegraph* reports, he's ordering his prisoners to wear pink underwear—in what he claims is an attempt to stop prison undies from being smuggled out and sold as a novelty. "These macho men may not like pink, but that's their problem," the sheriff (whose underwear color is not known) explained.



bronchial and asthma diseases among children every year.

Clinton officials, by contrast, have largely ignored the issue. The 1994 Surgeon General's report does not mention parental smoking as a children's health issue and dismisses its influence on youth smoking. Clinton even declared, in the August press conference announcing his campaign against teen smoking, that adult smoking is "a reasonable decision." Recognizing the electoral sway of 50 million adult smokers and the enormous lobbying power of the tobacco industry, the president reassured audiences that proposed anti-smoking policies apply only to kids.

While Clinton's crusade against teen smoking has been hailed as a blow to the tobacco industry, the larger picture reveals a significant retreat. Clinton failed to pursue the gutsy 75-cents-per-pack cigarette tax he floated during the 1992 presidential campaign, and he has not vigorously enforced laws against the export of untaxed and low-tax American cigarettes. His default on such tough, genuine anti-smoking measures effectively sabotaged Canada's promising $2-per-pack cigarette tax, which was stymied by a flood of cheap, smuggled U.S. smokes.

Clinton's pledge to "protect children from tobacco" rings hollow given his failure to address adult smoking, which damages the health of 25 million kids. The strongly anti-tobacco British medical journal *The Lancet* branded Clinton's teen smoking campaign as "ultimately cosmetic." Declared its editors: "If governments really want to kick the public's smoking habit, they must begin to tackle adult tobacco consumption." That is a mission for which Clinton shows no stomach. —Mike Males

RUSSIA'S NEW MILITARY CAMPAIGN

A defense ministry plan to storm Russia's political heights with a dedicated battalion of soldier-candidates in upcoming parliamentary elections has stunned observers here and drawn withering fire from professional politicians. "This is evidence of the general militarization of our society," said Alexei Arbatov, a deputy for the liberal Yabloko party and member of the parliament's defense commission. "It is another example of how the Yeltsin government increasingly leans on the armed forces rather than on the power of law."

Late last month, Defense Minister Pavel Grachev startled Russia's political community with the announcement that he had ordered 123 military officers—23 of them generals—to stand as territorial candidates for Russia's 450-seat Duma in elections scheduled for December 17. Grachev, almost certainly acting with the support of embattled President Boris Yeltsin, said the move was necessary because the current Duma has "failed to give the army the kind of assistance that was expected."

Military leaders have complained bitterly about funding cutbacks, which have left Russia's 2 million-strong armed forces unable to pay salaries or procure new equipment. But most analysts believe the army's foray into electoral politics is a desperate Kremlin ploy to get pro-government candidates into the Duma in any way possible. If so, it wouldn't mark the Yeltsin government's first controversial attempt to sway the December elections. In May, top government officials—people who, in a Western country, would be called senior civil servants—banded together with managers of state-owned industry and regional administrators to form a new electoral party, Our Home is Russia (OHIR). Led by Yeltsin's appointed prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, OHIR has spent vast resources and mobilized the immense influence of the state in an effort to take the Duma back from the opposition forces that have

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dominated it since the 1993 election.

But public opinion surveys show OHIR trailing far behind Yabloko and Russia's resurgent Communist Party. Consequently, many observers regard Grachev's maneuver as the Kremlin's fallback strategy. (It is revealing that few—if any—OHIR candidates will be contending in districts where defense ministry officers are running.) Observers believe there is a real chance that a substantial bloc of Grachev's men could make it into the Duma because, after almost four years of fruitless market reforms, Russians are fed up with almost all the other alternatives. But even if Grachev's candidates are elected, it seems uncertain whether Grachev can retain the loyalty of his men. The defense minister's deep unpopularity in the ranks has been widely documented. Moreover, the Russian Constitution stipulates that Duma members must resign their military commissions, which could mean that soldier-deputies will be ready prey for other political forces.

The appeal of a man in uniform is lost on no one in Russia. There are more than 50 parties and electoral blocs running for parliament, and most have at least one general figuring prominently on the ticket. Some have quite a few. Russia's most popular military leader, Gen. Alexander Lebed, recently resigned from the army to head the candidate list of the moderate nationalist Congress of Russian Communities. Lebed, a blunt-spoken admirer of former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet and a harsh critic of Yeltsin, is considered a serious contender in presidential elections slated for next June.

Dozens of old warriors top the lists of Russia's many new ultranationalist parties, including former KGB Gen. Alexander Sterligov, neo-fascist Gen. Vladislav Achalov and ex-Vice President Alexander Rutskoi, an Afghan war hero. The front-runner in early polls, the Communist Party, has several retired military officers on its slate. These include Gen. Valentin Varennikov, who was acquitted this year of charges stemming from his involvement in the August 1991 coup against former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev.

Communist Party spokesperson Eduard Kovalyov insisted that Varennikov's candidacy differs from that of Grachev's men. "It's one thing when retired officers—who are free citizens—run for political office, and quite another when active-duty personnel are sent to get involved in the elections," Kovalyov argued. "Does this mean, if they are elected, we will have a military government?"

—Fred Weir

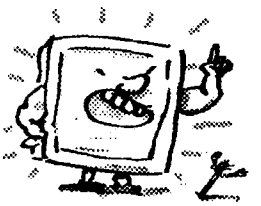
HEARTLESS IN SAN FRANCISCO

With San Francisco's November 7 mayoral election just around the corner, incumbent Frank Jordan has literally swept the city's homeless crisis onto the campaign's center stage. Capping a four-year first term marked by police crackdowns on the homeless, Jordan has dramatically escalated those efforts this fall. Since late August, police enforcing the mayor's special homeless program—known as "Matrix"—have arrested 150 homeless people and issued fines to 600 more.

Jordan introduced Matrix in 1993 as his get-tough plan to move the city's estimated 8,000-10,000 homeless people off the streets and into shelters. Teams of police officers and social workers were supposedly going to steer the homeless toward appropriate social service agencies. But statistics show that the number of homeless people arrested or fined has exceeded the number referred to social service programs by a 12-to-1 margin. More than 25,000 have been arrested or fined since Matrix began.

MEDIA WATCH

By Jennifer Gonnerman



Everyone knows there are rules about how much media a few men can control. And in the wake of the recent Time Warner-Turner merger, federal antitrust authorities promise to review those rules to ensure that the $7.4 billion deal is perfectly legal. One federal official told the *Washington Post* that even if the new conglomerate is legal, the merger "might be challenged because it presents too much control over public opinion and speech." But anti-monopoly activists aren't holding their breath for the deal to fall through.

One reason the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) might want to take a closer look at the merger is because John Malone, the CEO of Tele-Communications, Inc., the country's largest cable company, now has a 9 percent stake in Time Warner. "Any deal that has John Malone in it—everyone looks at it," says Professor Henry Geller, a communications expert at Duke University. That's because Malone isn't just one of the industry's most powerful players—he's also one of its most notorious. In 1993, he drove down the price of the Learning Channel by threatening to limit its distribution on TCI's cable system. Within four months, the Learning Channel's price had plummeted 25 percent. The Discovery Channel, partly owned by Malone, snapped it

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up at a bargain rate.

A second reason the FCC might want to take a closer look at this merger is that Malone's TCI and Time Warner serve close to half of the 61 million U.S. households that subscribe to cable. FCC regulations now prohibit individual cable companies from providing service to more than 30 percent of households. But this could change dramatically if the new industry-friendly telecommunications bill, which loosens these restrictions, becomes law. For media consumers, says news analyst and syndicated columnist Norman Solomon, the resulting consolidation of control will result in "more illusion of choice but more reality of homogenization of mass media" and in a narrowing of the range of cultural and political programming available to viewers.

This is the kind of "classic monopoly behavior" we can now expect more of, says Solomon. Only 50 years ago, the Justice Department sued the movie industry to keep the companies that produce movies separate from those that exhibit them. But nowadays, such anti-monopoly sentiment is hard to find. Says Geller: "The Reagan and Bush administrations actively encouraged these consolidations." (And more recently, the Republican-controlled Congress has revived the laissez-faire attitude of the '80s.)

Given the government's kid-gloves treatment of recent mergers, Time Warner is not particularly worried. As today's savvy media watchers know, antitrust police have lost their aggressive instinct. Just wait until CNN starts running features plugging Warner Bros.' latest movies.

Critics of the program say Jordan has failed to address the fundamental problem underlying the homeless crisis—a lack of safe and affordable housing. San Francisco's Coalition on Homelessness notes that the city's vastly inadequate shelter system turns away hundreds every night. Citing city records, the coalition says San Francisco's largest shelter turned away roughly the same number of people this August as it did in August 1993, when Matrix began.

Jordan's opponents have denounced the police rousts—though his most serious challenger, former California Assembly Speaker Willie Brown, has muted his criticism. Brown, who is running first in the polls, says he opposes Matrix, but would continue the crackdown on "aggressive panhandlers." Brown recently garnered the much-coveted endorsement of the city's Police Officers' Association.

Former Supervisor Roberta Achtenberg, who quit her post as President Clinton's assistant housing secretary to run for mayor, told the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* that Jordan is using the rousts "to whitewash the fact that in three and a half years he has not developed and properly implemented a comprehensive plan to manage San Francisco's homeless plan." Achtenberg is third in current polls.

Jordan, who is expected to end up in a runoff election against Brown, is apparently banking on the roundups to boost his law-and-order candidacy. At a drizzly early morning news conference late last month in Golden Gate Park, Jordan declared that the only way to save the park, the city's 1,000-acre crown jewel, is to shut it down at night. Closing it between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. would give police "one extra tool" to remove the homeless, he said. Whether these people will have anywhere to go, however, depends at least to some extent on the November 7 vote. —Christopher D. Cook

Tomorrow's News Tonight **By Steve Brodner**



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IN PERSON



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NEW PRESS

EYES ON THE PRI

Jorge Castañeda emerges as the leading critic of Mexico's ruling party

Born into a prominent family, educated at Princeton and the Sorbonne and fluent in four languages, Jorge G. Castañeda could have opted for a career in the Mexican foreign service. Instead, he chose a riskier course: In a country where government opponents are continually harassed and sometimes killed, Castañeda, 42, is one of the most eloquent and unyielding critics of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which has clung to power in Mexico since 1929.

Despite the PRI's interminable efforts to co-opt its adversaries on the intellectual left, Castañeda—along with such figures as Lorenzo Meyer, Adolfo Gilly, Elena Poniatowska and Adolfo Aguilar Zinser—has maintained his integrity as an independent analyst. His regular column in the muckraking weekly magazine *Proceso* is essential reading for the intelligentsia, while 25,000 copies of his most recent collection of essays, *Sorpresas te da la vida*, were devoured by a Mexican public increasingly disgusted with official propaganda.

Aided by his flawless English, Castañeda has in recent years become the leading Mexican voice in the U.S. media, supplanting the eminent literary figures Octavio Paz and Carlos Fuentes. His regular column in the *Los Angeles Times* and his articles in *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy* and *The Atlantic Monthly* reveal him to be a shrewd commentator on U.S.-Mexican relations, as well as the closest thing the Mexican opposition has to a U.S. spokesman.

It's a dual role Castañeda takes seriously. Unlike Fuentes, he was a vociferous critic of the North American Free Trade Agreement from the beginning, and he used his clout in the U.S. press, as well as his connections to Washington policy-makers, to attack the treaty. The Mexican government considers him a serious threat and on at least one occasion tried to have his column removed from the op-ed page of the *Los Angeles Times*.

After completing his doctorate in economic history at the Sorbonne,

ETC.

By Joel Bleifuss

Juiced up

If only O.J. Simpson had driven his white Bronco off into the sunset—or off a cliff—the world might be a better place.

Between January 1 and September 29, the evening "news" programs on ABC, CBS and NBC devoted 1,392 minutes (23.2 hours) to covering the O.J. Simpson trial. Those figures were compiled by the *Tyndall Report*, which provides a weekly account of how the networks fill their 20-minute daily news hole. In fact, the Simpson trial exceeded the combined coverage of the war in Bosnia and the Oklahoma City bombing, which, with a total of 1,292 minutes, have been the second and third most covered stories of the year. But, perhaps most disturbing, the network's reporting on the four major stories about the Gingrich revolution—the convening of the 104th Congress, attempts to balance the federal budget, restructuring welfare and cutting Medicare—received only 46 percent as much time as the trial.

How do the networks rank? During the 9-month period, low-brow NBC News devoted 14.6 percent of its news coverage to O.J., CBS expended 12.5 percent of its time on the trial and ABC gave it a scant 9.1 percent.

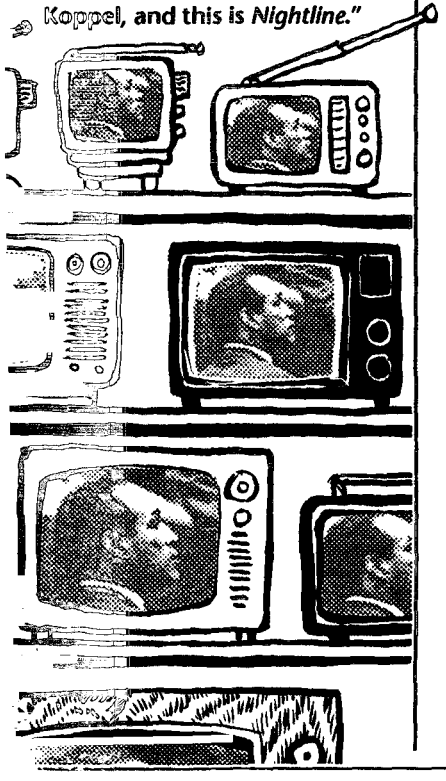
All three evening news shows were topped by the pre-eminent late night news program, ABC's *Nightline*. Since June 17, 1994—the night O.J. began taking the country on a ride—*Nightline* has devoted 49 programs to the sordid Simpson saga, or 14.8 percent

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of its programming. "Don't you think that's a bit excessive?" I asked *Nightline* publicist Eileen Murphy. "Obviously we don't, or we wouldn't have done it," she replied.

Nightline's obsession with Simpson reached its peak during the first 100 days of Congress, when Gingrich and company were ushering the United States into the Third World. According to *Extra!*, the publication of Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, between January 23 and March 15 *Nightline* devoted 45 percent of its programing to the trial. According to *Nightline*'s Ted Koppel, one of the "virtues" of a television news system where ratings determine coverage is that the public decides what it wants. As he told the *American Journalism Review*'s Jacqueline Sharkey, "If people are really tired of it, don't watch it, turn it off. You will be amazed at how quickly the networks get the message."

Imagine: "Good evening, I'm Geraldo, sitting in for Ted Koppel, and this is *Nightline*."



Castañeda returned to Mexico in 1978 and joined the Mexican Communist Party, which he left in 1980. But his main activity from 1979-82 was the unpaid collaboration he undertook with his father, who was then Mexico's foreign minister, to bring about a peaceful resolution to the civil war in El Salvador. Working closely with French writer and diplomat Régis Debray, Castañeda helped to draft the 1981 Franco-Mexican declaration on El Salvador, which called for the inclusion of the insurgent Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front in any peace negotiations. The declaration also served to bring international legitimacy to the rebel cause.

When Carlos Salinas de Gortari, a young, Harvard-educated economist, was chosen to succeed President Miguel de la Madrid, Castañeda agreed to be an adviser to Salinas' campaign. A few days before the July 1988 election, when it became apparent that a left-wing challenger, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, was about to win at least a quarter of the vote, Castañeda severed his ties to the Salinas team.

"I thought that many of the things [Salinas] wanted to do were the right things for the country, and I had a generational and personal proximity to them," Castañeda says, reflecting on his brief association with the PRI. "I was convinced at the time that there was no other way. That obviously was a mistake."

Many observers believe that Cárdenas won the election, but the PRI's machinations ultimately deprived him of victory. Following the contest Castañeda became an unpaid, occasional adviser to Cárdenas and stepped up his frontal assault on government corruption and unaccountability, a crusade he continues today.

Castañeda paid a price for breaking with the Salinas administration. In June 1990, shortly after he began to assail the proposed NAFTA agreement, his secretary was stopped on two occasions by armed men who told her that Castañeda would be killed unless his criticism of the government ceased. The death threats created a political firestorm in Mexico and prompted a front-page article in the *New York Times*. President Salinas phoned him from Japan to express his "solidarity in the face of this unacceptable incident." But the PRI's official newspaper, *El Nacional*, dismissed the affair, stating in an editorial that the threats against Castañeda "remained exclusively in the realm of his imagination."

Castañeda's American reputation rests on his discerning, elegantly written book, *Utopia Unarmed: The Latin American Left After the Cold War*, published by Alfred A. Knopf in 1993. *Utopia Unarmed* is both an elegiac history and a detailed, cogently argued blueprint for Latin America's transformation along social-democratic lines. Twenty or even 10 years ago, its reformist thesis would have generated outrage in leftist circles. But in light of recent history, Castañeda's program is a humane, even utopian, prescription for a region presently reeling from neoliberal excesses.

In early November, the New Press will publish Castañeda's latest book, *The Mexican Shock*, an analysis of the tumultuous and convoluted events that swept the country in 1994: the Chiapas uprising, the murder of Luis Donaldo Colosio, the presidential election of August 21 and the devaluation of the peso in December. Largely a postmortem on NAFTA, *The Mexican Shock* suggests that the country's problems did not originate in the trade agreement, nor will its hopes for a better future end with it. Though the treaty is irreversible, Castañeda argues, it can still be molded into an "instrument for growth with justice, for democracy within the rule of law, to help consolidate whatever sovereignty we have left, and to struggle against the intolerable corruption that plagues the country more than ever."

—Scott Sherman

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THE FIRST STONE

NIGHTMARE SOIL

By Joel Bleifuss

These days a home gardener hoping for a bumper crop can walk into the local nursery and pick up a bag of the multipurpose Milorganite. "Natural organic fertilizer," the bold-faced hype proclaims. The fine print explains: "This product meets 'Exceptional Quality' standards as defined by the EPA." But just two years ago that same fine print warned: "Should not be used on food crops ... most natural organic fertilizers contain trace amounts of heavy metals."

What's up? Milorganite hasn't changed. It's the same old shit, or, more precisely, sludge from the Milwaukee municipal sewer system. Nor has there been any change in the composition of the other leading municipal sewage fertilizers: Houston's Hou-actinite, Los Angeles' Nitrohumus and Chicago's Nu-Earth. But there is one difference. These products have all undergone linguistic detoxification. Sewer sludge, which was once considered hazardous waste and judged too dangerous to be used on food crops, has been deregulated by the EPA and redefined as an agricultural fertilizer. And fertilizers, as marketable products, are exempt from the laws that govern the disposal of hazardous waste. In effect, the EPA has found a way to make the waste problem that once plagued 15,000 publicly owned sewer plants disappear, at least in name.

Each year about 4 million metric tons of municipal sludge—about half of the total produced annually in the United States—are dumped on farm land. That sludge is derived chiefly from human excreta and from the water wastes of 130,000 industrial plants. Typically, municipal sewer sludge contains PCBs, dangerous pesticides such as chlordane, chlorinated compounds such as dioxin, heavy metals such as arsenic and lead, viruses such as Hepatitis A, eggs of parasitic worms, etc. Cornell University's Toxic Chemical Laboratory recently tested 50 municipal sludges and found that two-thirds contained asbestos. "You test it and you find so much—dioxin, PCBs, DDT, asbestos—it's an endless list," says Cornell toxicologist Donald Lisk. "Urban sewer sludge is a huge problem."

In fact, according to the *Archives of Environmental Contamination and Toxicology*, of 30 municipal sludges analyzed in 1983 only seven were considered suitable for land application. The sludge from the other 23 plants contained elevated levels of one or more heavy metals, such as lead and cadmium. But that was using the older, more stringent standards.

The EPA began the linguistic detoxification of sewage sludge in 1984, when it issued a beneficial sludge use and disposal policy that permitted the controlled use of treated sewage as fertilizer. In 1993, new regulations governing this sludge policy were written into "Part 503" of the Clean Water Act. These regulations, which in the sludge community are referred to as "503," further redefined the waste, deeming it "clean" enough for unrestricted use in America's gardens and fields.

This transformation occurred, not because the sludge was suddenly cleaner—though better treatment methods have helped to lower the concentrations of some heavy metals—but because the EPA raised the limits of acceptable exposure to some pollutants so that most of the nation's sludge could be classified as "clean."

For example, the new regulations increased the amount of lead that can be applied annually via fertilizer sludge from 111 pounds of lead per acre to 267 pounds per acre. The arsenic level was raised from 12.5 pounds per acre to 36 pounds per acre. The allowable amount of mercury jumped from 13.4 pounds per acre to 50 pounds per acre. And the amount of chromium permitted ballooned from 472 pounds per acre to 2,672 pounds per acre. In fact, under 503, sludge sold as fertilizer can be so contaminated with toxins that, according to the EPA, such sludge cannot be legally landfilled.

503 regulates only 21 carcinogenic pollutants found in sludge. These include 10 heavy metals, but not the other 15 inorganic priority toxins on the EPA's Superfund list. As for the permitted level of dioxin in sludge, the EPA is waiting to finish its never-ending dioxin reassessment before setting sludge limits for that poison. Germany, by contrast, has sharply curtailed the use of sludge fertilizer due to the danger posed by dioxin.

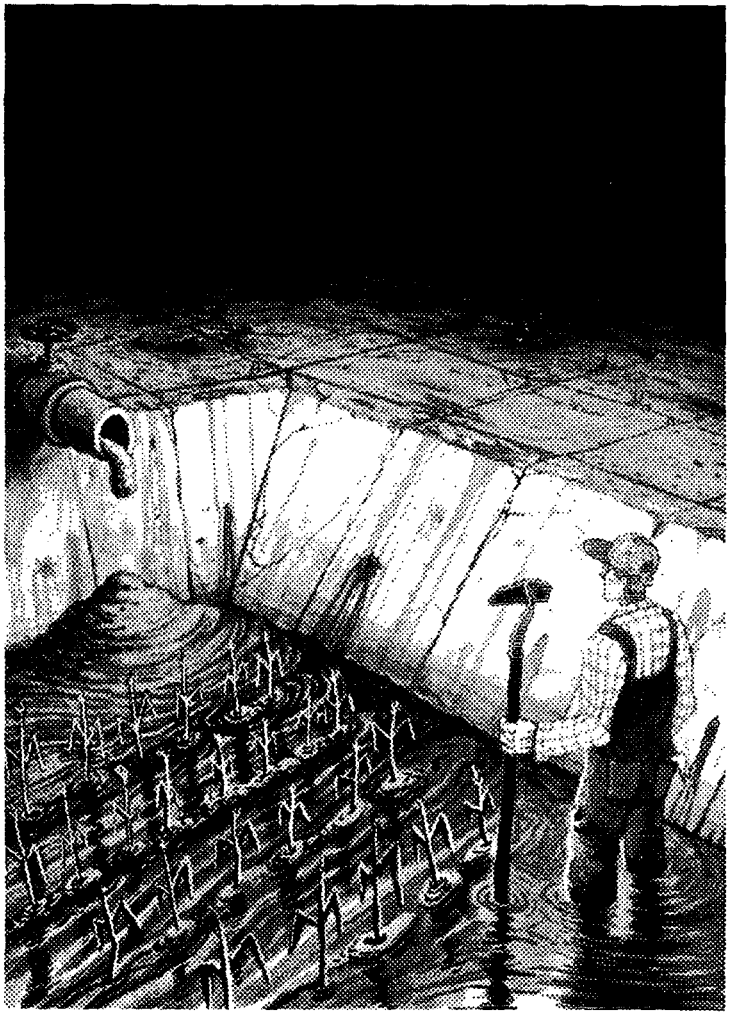
In effect, 503 circumvents the 1984 hazardous waste amendments to the Solid Waste Disposal Act, which regulate the dumping of sewage sludge. The new regulations also stipulate that no person, corporation or government body may be held liable for any damages caused by the use of sludge fertilizer.

The EPA admits that when drawing up 503 it did not take into account the possible impact of sludge contami-

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nants seeping into the water supply and leaching into the soil. Nor has the EPA examined how sludge fertilizer might affect wildlife. Of particular concern are animals that eat worms. Earthworms, not surprisingly, contain a lot of dirt and also accumulate heavy metals in their body tissue.

But earthworms aren't the only animals that can be contaminated with dangerous levels of heavy metals. In setting sludge safety standards for humans, the EPA assumed that children can safely absorb 10 micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, however, estimate that levels as low as 10 micrograms of lead will permanently lower a child's IQ. Further, the EPA's risk assessment compounds this problem by assuming that food grown with sludge fertilizer will be evenly consumed by the total population. But that is certainly not the case for families who exponentially increase their exposure by using unlabeled sludge fertilizers on their their home gardens.



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Nor did the EPA evaluate multiyear applications of sludge fertilizer and the resulting toxic buildup of those pollutants, such as heavy metals, that stay in the soil without decomposing. In fact, for these very reasons, the National Food Processors Association still advises its members not to buy food grown with sludge fertilizer. But all that may be changing. Ketchup-maker H.J. Heinz, which once opposed the concept of sludge farming, is waiting for final approval of the practice from the National Academy of Sciences, which is studying the issue. And should the academy endorse farming with sludge fertilizer, the National Food Processors Association will not only go along with that verdict, but, what's more, it will "strongly oppose" any labeling of food grown on sludge-fertilized land.

In drafting 503, the EPA also failed to explore how the land-dumping of millions of tons of contaminated sludge will pollute groundwater. Of particular concern are the wells upon which rural residents depend. The agency realizes there is a risk. In 1986, when 503 was still on the drawing board, the EPA declared: "Low concentrations of a pollutant such as arsenic are a significant risk if that sludge is to be landfilled or land farmed. ... A potential for contamination of surrounding or underlying soil and/or groundwater does exist from disposal of sludge containing pollutants." But those concerns seem to have been discarded in the EPA's detoxification of sludge.

The EPA is also ignoring the threat to public safety posed by biologic pathogens that enter sludge through human and animal excrement. In 1989, the EPA documented the presence of 25 infectious agents in sewage sludge: five bacteria (including Salmonella), nine viruses (including Hepatitis A), five intestinal worms (such as tapeworms and hookworms), five protozoa (one of these, Cryptosporidium, killed 100 people in Milwaukee) and one fungi (Aspergillus, which also can be fatal). According to the EPA, "If sewage sludge containing high levels of pathogenic organisms or high concentrations of pollutants is improperly handled, the sludge could contaminate the soil, water, crops livestock, fish and shellfish."

Because of the dangers from human and animal pathogens, the EPA, when writing 503, divided sludge fertilizer into two grades, A and B. Grade A, considered an "exceptional quality" fertilizer by the EPA, is heat-treated to reduce disease-bearing organisms. The use of grade A fertilizer is totally unregulated. It can be freely applied on all lawns and human-food crops. Grade B fertilizer, because it has not been heat-treated, is only allowed on above-ground crops such as wheat and corn. Despite these gradations, the exceptionally pure grade A has just as many chemical contaminants as grade B does.

And, ironically, the heat-treating responsible for grade A's "exceptional quality" is an ineffective method of killing bacteria, viruses and parasite eggs. According to a 1992 study by a group of University of Arizona soil scientists, present sludge-treatment methods do not effectively kill human pathogens. The researchers concluded: "Significant numbers

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of pathogens exist in sludge even after stabilization and treatment. If these pathogens can remain viable for extended periods of time, groundwater sources beneath sludge disposal and land application sites may become contaminated. ... Once in groundwater, they may travel significant distances from the site. ... Viruses [which can survive in the ground for months], because of their small size, probably have the greatest potential of all pathogens for actually reaching groundwater and being transported from the site."

Sludge from New York City is particularly infected with human pathogens. Eleven of New York's 14 sewage-treatment plants are not up to modern treatment standards. Half were built in the 1930s. In addition, the city does not know how many industries discharge waste into the municipal sewer system. City environmental officials regulate only 1,090 industrial plants, and estimate that there might be another 2,000 that are unregulated.

New York City's waste is so contaminated that the state's Department of Environmental Conservation will not allow it to be applied on land in New York. The sludge is also too dirty for Pennsylvania or Ohio. So, New York City had to go further afield to find a state willing to take some of its sludge. To help in this quest, the city hired a Long Island firm, Merco Joint Venture Co.

In 1992, Merco set its sights on southwestern Oklahoma. Understandably, the rural citizenry were not pleased at the prospect of becoming the Big Apple's pay toilet. Joseph Maness, an environmental physiologist at Southwestern Oklahoma State University in Weatherford, helped lead the successful effort to block Merco. In 1992 testimony before the Oklahoma state legislature, Maness argued that the EPA's policy of promoting the spreading of sludge over land "is not so much to benefit land, but rather to benefit sewage-treatment plants faced with the problem of disposal of millions of tons of sludge."

After being defeated in Oklahoma, Merco went to take a dump in the unregulated fields of Arizona. In this frontier state, it found a landowner, Ronald Bryce, who was willing to spread 41,000 tons of NYC sludge over his farms. Reporter Keith Bagwell chronicled what went down in a series of stories in Tucson's *Arizona Daily Star*. The first shipments of New York City sludge contained petroleum hydrocarbons that were 14 to 22 times as great as the state cleanup level for tainted soil. These hydrocarbon pollutants included the potent carcinogens benzene, toluene and xylene. In addition, New York City sewer sludge spread over the Arizona farmland contained coliform bacteria from human feces at levels 33.5 times higher than the federal limit. "That sounds more like untreated sludge," the EPA's sludge inspector, Laura Fondahl, told Bagwell in 1994. Fondahl, who is based in San Francisco, is charged with the impossible task of monitoring the sludge produced and dumped in Arizona, California, Nevada, Hawaii, Arizona and Guam.

But the most popular dumpsite for New York City sludge is Sierra Blanca, Texas, a poor, largely Hispanic community whose surrounding countryside is receiving 225 tons of New York sewage a day. When Michael Moore lampooned this outrage during an Aug. 2, 1994 segment of *TV Nation*, Merco filed a $33 million lawsuit against show backer Tristar Television, segment reporter Roy Serkoff, local activist Bill Addington and EPA whistleblower Hugh Kaufman. On the show, Kaufman had characterized Merco's operation as an "illegal haul and dump operation masquerading as an environmentally beneficial project." The company denies all charges.

The run-up to the trial, set to begin next spring, has been followed closely by *Sludge*, the sewage industry's biweekly newsletter. *Sludge's* August 1 issue reports that the EPA's Office of the General Counsel has refused a subpoena to testify in the case. As *Sludge* explains, "Federal agencies are allowed to turn down subpoenas if deemed not in the government's best interest."

Certainly the best interests of EPA officials would not be served if the general public were to realize what is going on. In 1989, the EPA came out with its proposed 503 regulation. During the public comment period that followed, industry officials came out in force to challenge the proposed rules. In an effort to settle the dispute, the EPA turned to Terry Logan, a professor of soil science at Ohio State University who, in 1984, had helped invent the concept of "clean sludge." In 1989, Logan served as co-chair of the Land Practices Peer Review Committee, which recommended that 503's proposed regulations be made less stringent. As Logan was rewriting 503 he was also serving as a board member of and consultant to N-Viro International Corp. Using a process invented by Logan, this Ohio-based company mixes sewage sludge with cement-kiln dust to make fertilizer. Logan currently serves as president of Pan-American N-Viro, Inc, an N-Viro subsidiary that was created to market this waste-disposal process to Latin America. Another consultant to N-Viro is former EPA chief William Reilly, who receives $2,000 a month for his services. During Reilly's tenure, N-Viro won an award from the agency for "outstanding technology development contributing to enhanced beneficial use of municipal wastewater sludge."

In fact, the EPA financially supports the very industry it is supposed to regulate. The agency issues grants to the Water Environment Federation (WEF), a trade and lobbying organization formerly known as the Federation of Sewage Works Associations. This coalition of sewer operators has consistently opposed federal attempts to clean up the nation's water. According to *Sludge*, the WEF supported the Clean Water Act reauthorization bill devised by the House Republicans because "the legislation would reduce [sludge] quality by relaxing federal pre-treatment standards."

This curious conflict of interest was discovered by John Stauber, founder and editor of *PR Watch*. Last year, Stauber and writer Sheldon Rampton were trying to come up with a catchy title for a book they were writing on the public relations industry. Inspired by a Tom Tomorrow cartoon, they hit upon the name "Toxic

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Sludge is Good for You." They then found out that the WEF was about to launch a campaign to convince the public of exactly that.

That campaign is being headed by Alan Rubin, the man who spearheaded the EPA's sludge-fertilizer disposal program. Rubin is on "loan" from the EPA to the WEF. The April 1994 *Environment Today* reported that Rubin will "serve as cheerleader for a joint EPA-WEF sludge education campaign. Recalcitrant states, wary lenders and other foot-draggers are the effort's chief targets."

At Rubin's side will be the best flacks money can buy. In 1992, the EPA awarded the WEF a $300,000 grant to promote the use of sludge fertilizer. In turn, the federation hired the services of Powell Tate, the Washington PR firm born from the union of former Carter press secretary Jody Powell and Bush aide Sheila Tate.

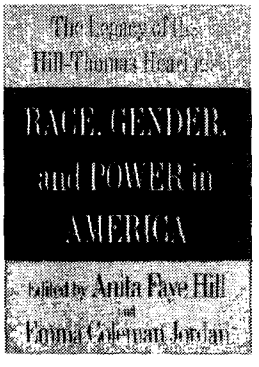
Documents obtained by Stauber through Freedom of Information Act requests include Powell Tate's research findings and proposed communications plan. (The EPA, which has released only a few documents, is withholding internal memos and other materials that chronicle the creation of this strange alliance. Stauber plans to go to court to obtain them.) According to the documents released, the cornerstone of the Powell Tate strategy is to promote the WEF's new name for sludge: biosolids.

"The negatives of the term 'sludge' are overwhelming," notes the Powell Tate communications plan. But the necessary rehabilitation, according to the firm, is being obstructed by EPA employees who refuse to get with the program. "The EPA's use of the term 'sewage sludge' instead of 'biosolids' may neutralize the agency's efforts to gain widespread acceptance of the term biosolids," warns Powell Tate. "The research suggests that emphasizing the clear differences between biosolids and sludge will be critical to WEF's ability to increase audience acceptance of biosolid's land application. ... Achieving this goal will be markedly more difficult as long as sludge and biosolids are perceived as interchangeable or even similar

Important people

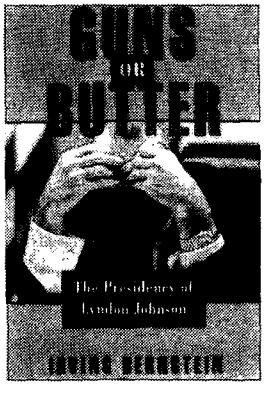


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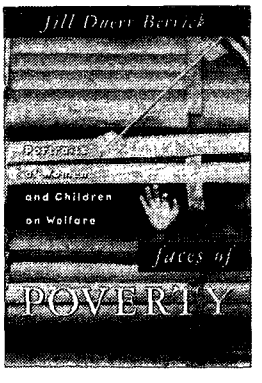


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products." According to Powell Tate, sludge fertilizer should ideally come to be viewed as "a vitamin pill for the earth."

Manipulating the public's perception of sludge was one of the central topics at the annual WEF conference in Kansas City this past July. Powell Tate PR specialist Charlotte Newton advised WEF conferees to marginalize critics of biosolids. "Attack them in a way that does not demonize them," she said. "Do it in any way that does not make [their doubts] their fault.... You can't play to those who act weirdest."

But what PR tactics can't accomplish, budgets cuts might. *Sludge* reports that the EPA has plans to dismantle its "biosolids" program. Michael Cook, the director of the EPA's Office of Wastewater, said the agency is "considering ways of greatly simplifying"—in other words, gutting—a planned evaluation of sludge dumping's ecological impact. "I think everyone agrees sewage sludge is a low priority for the agency," he said.

Sewage sludge is also a low-priority issue for national environmental organizations. The Washington-based groups have been reluctant to challenge land-based sludge dumping. After winning hard-fought battles to curtail the disposal of sludge through ocean dumping and incineration, many organizations feel they do not have the energy to take on this issue—especially since that would involve an attack on the EPA, the very agency that environmentalists fear might be eliminated altogether by the current Congress.

However, the news is not all bad. On a county-by-county level, sludge dumping can be stopped. The commissioners of Rappahannock County, Va., have successfully stopped the use of sewage as fertilizer. Despite being challenged by three farmers who had been hired to spread sludge on their fields by BioGro, a subsidiary of Waste Management, Inc., the ban has been upheld in higher courts.

And a growing number of environmentalists believe there are viable technologies available that promise real—rather than linguistic—solutions to sludge pollution. For the past 22 years Abby Rockefeller has been studying the sludge problem. These days she is devoting her share of the family fortune to finding a solution. Rockefeller, as president of Clivus Multrum, Inc. of Cambridge, Mass., markets composting toilets, which are one of the on-site, sewer-avoiding technologies that can upgrade failing septic systems. She also heads the ReSource Institute for Low Entropy Systems, a group that is working in poor communities in Latin America, teaching people economical ways of managing resources, including "so-called human waste and so-called wastewater."

"We need to make the public understand what is going on," she says. "In the '70s, Sweden used sludge on land, and some of that land is now totally out of use. Because you can't control what people and industries pour down the drain, the toxicity of the sludge is unpredictable. Nor is it enough to keep industry out of the sewer system, since many household materials presently on consumers' shelves are largely toxic. But people don't know this because the EPA and some of the major environmental groups like the Natural Resource Defense Council and the Environmental Defense Fund [tacit supporters of the EPA's sludge-fertilizer policy] have kept their mouths shut on the subject. I had thought I could get support from environmental groups, but I was being naive."

Rockefeller is more hopeful that grassroots groups such as Neighbor to Neighbor, which in the late '80s and early '90s waged a successful boycott against Salvadoran coffee growers, may adopt the sludge issue as part of a major consumer consciousness-raising effort.

"It does no good to talk about the lesser of two evils," she says, referring to those environmental groups that believe land-based dumping is preferable to incineration or ocean dumping. "They are all equally bad. Sludge is a waste, and letting people swim in it or breathe it is no worse than letting people eat it." ◀

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH by Peter Hannan



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BLACK AMERICA

The dish on Dinesh

***Black conservative scholars see red over* The End of Racism.**

By **Salim Muwakkil**

With his new book, *The End of Racism*, Dinesh D'Souza has lobbed a hand grenade into the melee of American racial discourse. And D'Souza, whose book blames African-Americans' disproportionate miseries on an alleged "civilization gap," is already feeling some ugly aftereffects from the blast.

Black nationalist Robert Starks likens the Indian-born D'Souza to Gunga Din, the Indian servant who, in Rudyard Kipling's famous poem, sacrifices his life to facilitate the British army's conquest of his native land—all for the glory of Western Civilization. "Just like the Kipling character, D'Souza is performing yeoman's duty in protecting the notion of white supremacy," says Starks, an associate professor of political science at Northeastern University in Chicago.

D'Souza, 34, is no stranger to this sort of controversy. Shortly after coming to the United States in 1978, he entered Dartmouth College and became editor of the bratty-right *Dartmouth Review*, where he began earning his reputation as a caustic commentator on matters of race. After graduation he became a fellow at the conservative Heritage Foundation, and from 1985 to 1987 he served as editor of *Policy Review*, the foundation's house organ. D'Souza did a stint as a domestic policy analyst in the Reagan administration, and since 1989 he's been with the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), a right-wing think tank.

His first book, *Illiberal Education: The Politics of Sex and Race on Campus*, attacked academic multiculturalism as a destructive fraud. D'Souza blasted Afrocentricity and feminist studies as the specious but logical byproduct of the cultural relativism that he says is at the heart of liberalism. His work, combative and well-argued, was hailed by the right and largely condemned by the left. Understandably delighted with an ally "of color," conservatives quickly embraced D'Souza as a rising star and placed him in the media spotlight. Many of the arguments he advanced in *Illiberal Education* are extended and embellished in his latest effort.

D'Souza apparently sees himself as an iconoclast, uniquely willing to challenge the taboos surrounding issues of race and culture. Starks sees it differently. "What we have is an Indian immigrant who is seeking status as an honorary white man by adopting the American way of racism. He's a despicable character." Of course, it's not surprising that a black activist with a vested interest in maintaining a sense of racial grievance would take issue with D'Souza's argument. What is odd, however, is that some of the book's most vociferous critics thus far have been two well-known black conservatives—colleagues from the AEI whom D'Souza himself cites favorably in the controversial volume.

Robert Woodson and Glenn Loury both resigned from the institute in protest of the book. "I think D'Souza makes an erroneous and dangerous argument," Woodson said in a televised interview on C-Span. "And I don't want to see the book used to polarize us further." Woodson was an AEI resident fellow and had been affiliated with the group since 1977. Woodson is also president of the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise, a group that works with impoverished black Americans to rebuild their communities. He strenuously argues that ordinary African-Americans are as capable as the liberal bureaucrats and black elites who often make decisions in their name. Consequently, Woodson finds D'Souza's arguments that low-income blacks suffer from a civilization gap particularly galling. The very black communities in which Woodson finds his reasons for hope are condemned by D'Souza as places "where the streets are irrigat-

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ed with alcohol, urine and blood," and there is a "revival of barbarism in the midst of Western civilization."

Loury is a professor of economics at Boston University and was a member of the AEI's Council of Academic Advisers. He has written several critiques of *The End of Racism* and, during a recent interview, talked at length about the controversy surrounding the book. "The book is offensive to any person who knows the history of the racial struggle in this country," he says. Among other things, D'Souza's new book maintains that slavery was not racist, that segregation was designed to protect blacks, that the civil rights movement was deeply flawed and that white racism bears little responsibility for blacks' problems. According to Loury, "D'Souza's characterization is superficial, snide and inaccurate." Loury is quick to note that he respects D'Souza's intelligence and even agrees with some of his arguments. "But his good points are undermined by his reliance on data that is demonstrably wrong. His book boils down to a polemic in service to an ideology and does a disservice to history."

Black conservatives are taking the lead in denouncing *The End of Racism* because they feel a particular sense of betrayal when they read D'Souza's racist nonsense, says Adolph Reed Jr., columnist for the *Progressive* and the *Village Voice*. "My grandmother used to say if you lie down with dogs you get up with fleas, and Loury and Woodson have been sleeping in the dog pound. Now they have come face to face with the logical conclusions of their silly arguments—and they don't like what they see."

Loury doesn't completely disagree. "I admit that in some sense I'm being hoist on my own petard. I can clearly see that in some of my criticisms of this book are some of the same criticisms that those on the left have made about my books—the purported pathology of black American culture, for example."

Loury concedes that D'Souza's use of his own work has forced him to re-examine some positions. "I now realize that I may have been incautious in gauging the extent to which my own arguments could be used to reinforce his destructive ideas." Loury's new book, *One by One from the Inside Out: Race and Responsibility in America*, chronicles his journey through the rhetorical thickets of race analysis: from a brash black conservative whose contrarian ideas and bellicose rhetoric endeared him to the Reagan and Bush administrations, to someone more willing to consider shades and nuances and less condemning of his less fortunate brethren.

Loury believes that *The End of Racism*—like Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein's *The Bell Curve*—is part of an assault launched by conservatives to make discussions about black inferiority respectable again. D'Souza's book, he says, simply "ascribes black failure to the pathologies of black culture, rather than to the content of our chromosomes." But the troubling message is the same.

Reed thinks Loury and Woodson are disingenuous. "They've been going down the line from one victim-blaming argument to another, attributing black Americans' lack of equality to our own inadequacies," he says. In order to accept that argument, Reed contends, "they have to share the presumption that black people essentially are inferior. It's dishonest and too late to back out now; they paved the way for this shit."

Not all conservatives are angered by D'Souza's work. Thomas Sowell, the prolific economist and author at the Hoover Institution, praises *The End of Racism* as a work of courage and clarity. Sowell long has argued that group success or failure is primarily a function of cultural behavior. That argument is the central feature of D'Souza's book.

In fact the controversial book, at points, expresses views that wouldn't be out of place among a gathering of Starks' nationalists. For example, D'Souza urges African-Americans to "buy black" and become more focused on developing black-owned businesses. "Groups that succeed through the private sector don't need many civil rights leaders, only entrepreneurs," he writes. "Yet although blacks as a group have a gross and per capita income that exceeds that of many industrialized nations, very little of this money is spent on products sold by black-owned business. Despite a few modestly successful 'buy black' campaigns, African-Americans, who are famous for their political solidarity as a group, to date show no comparable sense of economic solidarity."

In Loury's opinion, it is D'Souza's mixing of sensible insights with specious reasoning that makes the book so harmful. He attributes D'Souza's condescending attitude to the cocoon of celebrity that has surrounded him since his *Dartmouth Review* days. "He's sitting in the AEI," Loury says, "with everyone telling him he's the best thing since white bread, and I think it tends to breed a kind of cockiness. I think his arguments are a product of hubris." Noting that D'Souza has no formal research training, Loury says he must rely on his skills as a slash-and-burn polemicist willing to violate the delicate protocol of intellectual discourse on matters of race.

Despite his best intentions, D'Souza may have performed an essential service by writing *The End of Racism* and forcing black conservatives to confront the fruit of their theories. After opening the gate to the idea of black inferiority, they can be sure that the Gunga Dins (or Uncle Toms) of the world will try to hold it open for the glory of Western Civilization. ◀

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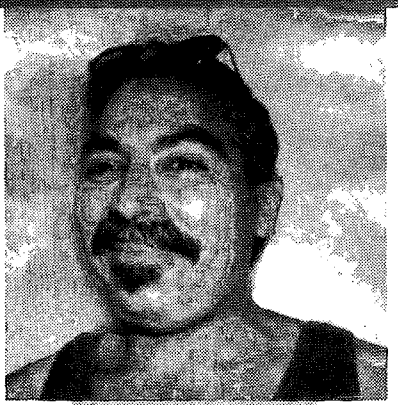
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MIDEAST

Discord in the city of David

Israel's "Jerusalem 3000" celebration sends a dangerous message during delicate peace talks.

By David E. Blank

The late September agreement to transfer control of several West Bank cities and towns to the Palestinians is a major step in advancing the Israeli-Palestinian Accords of 1993. But even as Israel agreed to give up some of its control over the Occupied Territories, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin insisted that Jerusalem will remain an Israeli-controlled city, which it has been since the 1967 war. Under the 1993 agreement, Jerusalem's status was to be kept on hold until the final stage of the peace process (originally scheduled to begin in May 1996). But in an effort to ensure that Jerusalem's fate is nonnegotiable, the Israelis have embarked on a potentially dangerous course of action. On September 4, Israel inaugurated its most recent ploy—a boisterous 15-month celebration of "Jerusalem 3000" to commemorate the biblical King David's conquest of the "City of Peace." Rabin's opening-ceremony declaration that a "united Jerusalem is the heart of the Jewish people and the capital of the state of Israel" is a clear sign that the Israelis intend to quash any serious discussions about the city's future.

Although the celebration is nothing more than Israeli boosterism, "Jerusalem 3000" has stirred up enough malignant religious cant to threaten the Israeli-Palestinian peace accords. In protest, Canada, the Vatican, the Islamic world, most major Christian denominations in this country, and progressive Jewish groups in the United States and Israel have refused to acknowledge or participate in the series of events. And, while the Clinton administration has made no statement on the festival, the American ambassador to Israel absented himself from the opening ceremony. Of course, the Palestinians (who were never invited in the first place) have boycotted the bash and, much to the chagrin of the Israelis, are telling anyone who will listen that Jerusalem is really 5,000 years old and was named the "City of Peace" long before the biblical David was even around to think of conquering it.

The European Union (EU) also refused to participate, on the grounds that the festival unjustly laid exclusive claims to Jerusalem as a strictly Jewish and Israeli city. Before the EU boycott, however, the Italian city of Florence offered to donate a full-sized replica of Michelangelo's *David*. But loyal to its medieval values, the Orthodox majority on Jerusalem's City Council turned down the offer because of *David*'s nudity. The council's reasoning goes hand in hand with the values of the Christian right in America, which has promised to show its solidarity with "Jerusalem 3000" by sending a chorus of gospel singers and 10,000 evangelical visitors to help celebrate the anniversary.

Among the organizers of this extremist love-in are New York State Assemblyman Dov Hikind and his wife Shani, both followers of the late Jewish Defense League founder Meir Kahane. Opposed to the peace process, these two fancy themselves the controllers of New York's Jewish vote and therefore potential kingmakers in the 1996 presidential election. Shani Hikind is associated with the Jerusalem Reclamation Project, an organization that funnels some $1 million a year into private Israeli efforts to purchase Palestinian property in and around the Old City and suburbs such as Silwan. An Arab town that encompasses part of King David's Jerusalem, Silwan was chosen as the site of the opening-day ceremony. The provocation was obvious. The location of several hotly contested but government-condoned seizures of Arab houses four years ago, Silwan stands as an irreducible symbol of Palestinians' status as

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second-class citizens.

Indeed, the party-like atmosphere of "Jerusalem 3000"—replete with banners, fireworks, laser shows and open-air concerts—has served largely to exacerbate tensions between Palestinians and Jewish residents; it has also, however, masked growing dissension within Israeli and American Jewish communities. At issue are the nature of the Mideast peace process and the future of Jerusalem. While Jewish moderates still hope for compromise, militants in both countries, emboldened by the Democratic Party's 1994 electoral disaster and by the weakness of both the Clinton administration and the Rabin government, hope to derail the peace process and secure a fully Judaicized Jerusalem. Indeed, as Letty Cottin Pogrebin of the Jewish group Americans for Peace Now wrote recently in *Tikkun*, influential segments of the American Jewish community have essentially abandoned rational discourse on the future division of Jerusalem in favor of "the 'three forevers'—Jerusalem will be forever Israel's capital, forever united and forever under Jewish control."

In America as in Israel, the so-called "battle for Jerusalem" has provoked considerable violence. In late 1993, Jewish terrorists planted a bomb (harmlessly detonated by New York police) in the Manhattan building that houses Americans for Peace Now. And at a fundraising breakfast before the Salute to Israel Day parade on May 21 of this year, wealthy right-wing American Zionists shouting "shut up for the sake of Jerusalem" drowned out Israeli Communications Minister Shulamit Aloni, a well-known advocate of the peace process. Emotions ran so high that Jacques Avital, the parade's honorary chairman and a $10,000 donor to the event, allegedly assaulted and punched the 66-year-old Aloni, who has since filed criminal charges against him.

That same day, Abraham Hecht, an orthodox American rabbi speaking to an audience of 1,500 in Brooklyn, made the incredible statement that he would condone the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Rabin for surrendering "Jewish Land" on the West Bank and Gaza. Such incidents have provoked Rabin to accuse extremist American rabbis of being racists and "would-be ayatollahs."

Of course, at ground zero—Jerusalem—the battle is raging even more violently. This summer's Hamas bombing received significant media attention, but Jerusalem's Jewish residents are also implicated in the fracas. Extremists are suspected of torching the West Jerusalem Baptist church and have used bombings and armed demonstrations to close down Jewish-owned shops and restaurants that stay open on Saturdays. In Palestinian East Jerusalem, bands of armed Jewish extremists routinely harass residents. Indeed, this harassment has been so severe that the U.S. consul general in the city, Edward Abington, has protested Israeli failure to prevent the bands from firing guns in the air while demonstrating outside the home of Palestinian leader Faisal al-Husseini, which also serves as the informal headquarters of the Palestinian National Authority.

But militant gangs aren't the only ones harassing Palestinians. Alleging that the Palestinian Broadcasting Company, the Health Council and the Bureau of Statistics violated a law against political activity in the city, the Israeli Police Minister, Moshe Shahal, ordered Palestinians to close Jerusalem offices in late August. The move clearly violated a previous agreement between Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Yasser Arafat that stated that existing Palestinian offices in the city would be allowed to stay open during the peace process. Eventually, Shalal backed down and agreed to honor the Peres-Arafat deal. This followed a failed, illegal attempt by Rabin to expropriate 130 acres of Palestinian land in the Jerusalem area. He rescinded the order under pressure from Israeli Arab Knesset members, who have an increasing influence in determining Jerusalem's future.

In contrast to hard-line Israeli officials and right-wingers, an increasing number of moderate Israelis are coming around to the notion that the only resolution to the struggle over Jerusalem might be a form of shared sovereignty. With the Palestinians retaining a strong institutional presence in the city, such moderation may provide more room for continued progress in the peace talks than does the spangled boosterism of "Jerusalem 3000."

David E. Blank is a retired professor of urban planning and political science who has lived in Jerusalem.

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POLITICS

Reviving the public sector

Why reports of the welfare state's demise are premature.

By David Moberg

Is the welfare state finished? Judging from legislation now in Congress, it would seem so. Yet it is far too early to write off the heritage of the New Deal.

Signs of collapse loom everywhere. On the 60th anniversary of Social Security and the 30th anniversary of Medicare, congressional Republicans are advancing the largest cutback of federal social welfare benefits in history. They are jettisoning existing federal guarantees of minimal incomes and medical care, key parts of the "social safety net." They are breaking up universal systems such as Medicare into state-administered block grants, a move likely to diminish both the quality and the popularity of these programs. In addition, they are greatly weakening or dismantling a wide range of smaller, more targeted programs, such as student loans and worker retraining, and drastically reining in scores of agencies that regulate private business for the general welfare.

On some points—such as welfare reform—Clinton and many congressional Democrats have gone along with the least offensive set of Republican changes. Meanwhile, public protests are few and fragmented. Conventional wisdom says the people are either sick of big government, welfare and taxes or are convinced that the country can no longer afford the welfare state.

But if we're killing off the welfare state, we might want to ask what we're constructing in its place. It is less likely to be some high-tech version of Jeffersonian democracy (or an imagined virtuous society of the 1950s) than it is to be a return to the late 1890s and the era that followed, a time of robber barons, political dominance by business and great economic inequality and instability.

The welfare state emerged in reaction to that sort of disorder. Motivated by a desire for a more humane society, by fear of radical political unrest and by the need to save capitalism from its own self-destructive tendencies, the creators of the welfare state helped ensure a long run of prosperity and stability.

The New Deal-Great Society epoch rested on two pillars: on one hand, a political coalition, on the other, national programs of both income redistribution and public investment. Implicitly, the welfare state recognizes that rising productivity, especially in a complex industrial society, is not just the work of individual investors, managers or workers but of society as a whole. In contrast to the unfettered free market—which makes it easier for the powerful few to capture a disproportionate share of the wealth—the welfare state shares that wealth. In redistributing society's riches, it creates the rudiments of a national community and extends democracy beyond formal rights—free speech or voting, for example—to new social rights (or "entitlements," a legitimate idea now used derisively). These include a right to minimum wages or incomes, medical care, education, housing, food and potentially much more—the kind of services European welfare states regularly provide their citizens.

The New Deal political coalition that ensured some of those entitlements is now dead: Gone are the big city machines (the suburbs rule now), the Solid South (increasingly solid Republican) and a powerful labor movement (now much smaller and weaker). The Democrats' fumbling attempts in the 1960s to grapple with racial injustice, combined with Republican exploitation of racial backlash, created a great fissure in the coalition. But it would not have been fatal had it not been for what followed.

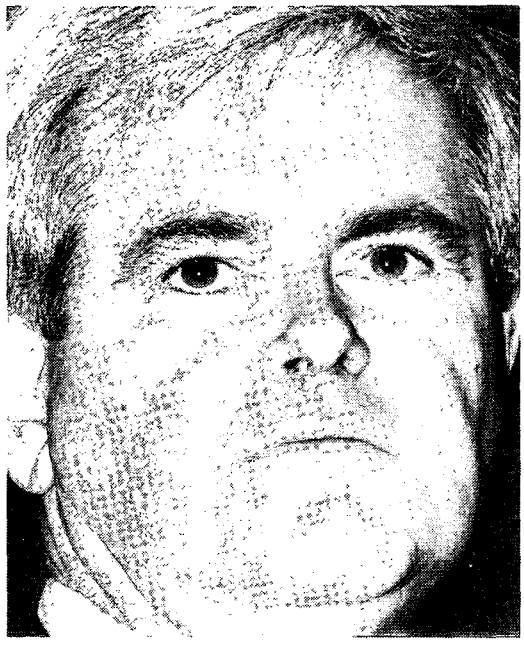
Beginning in the 1970s, growth in both productivity and economic output began to sputter, and the United States entered an era of wage stagnation and decline that was only

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partly offset by the dramatic increase of women in the workforce. By the late 1970s that stagnation had turned into a trend toward inequality that has accelerated ever since.

There is still no definitive explanation of this shift, but it seems to be linked to the immersion of the United States into a global economy it no longer dominates. Though the welfare state did impose some new tax burdens, it cannot be blamed for slow growth; countries with more generous welfare states grew more rapidly than the United States during the 1970s. Rather, slow growth (compounded by capital flight from the cities and out of the country) created a fiscal crisis for the welfare state. Working- and middle-class taxpayers, already squeezed by stagflation, rebelled against higher taxes, but businesses and the rich won most of the tax cuts.

Finding their profits squeezed, business interests grew weary of their postwar accommodation with the welfare state and eventually turned downright hostile to the New Deal legacy of "big government." At the same time, as election expenses grew and television came to dominate politics, Democrats became more dependent on corporations and the wealthy to finance their campaigns. As a result, the party diminished its allegiance to the broad working- and middle-class base of New Deal politics. It also neglected to push policies that would have strengthened the welfare state, such as single-payer national health insurance or job programs, especially for the country's deindustrializing cities.



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With shrinking paychecks and growing inequality, there was both declining support for government and growing fragmentation of society. Exploiting the divide between the haves and the have-nots, Reagan won the presidency in part on promises to dismantle the welfare state. In fact, Reagan made only small structural changes in entitlement programs, but his budget deficits remained an effective weapon in the fight against all government programs.

Nonetheless, although Americans increasingly distrusted the federal government, disliked taxes and wanted to force people on welfare to work, a strong majority had not given up support for the basic features of the welfare state: Social Security, Medicare and aid to education. In fact, despite the Republican sweep last November, a majority of Americans still oppose such House Republican measures as denying welfare to teen mothers or additional payments to women who have children while on welfare. Also, as the year has progressed, public dissatisfaction with Republican policies and with Congress has steadily increased.

Clearly there has been a conservative shift in the electorate. Yet, as pollster Stanley Greenberg argues in the current issue of *The American Prospect*, in 1994 Republican conservatives became more ideological and motivated while vast numbers of non-college-educated, Democratic-leaning voters simply stayed home. In the same issue, Ruy A. Teixeira and Joel Rogers argue persuasively that there has also been a dramatic decline in support of the Democrats by non-college educated white men and women because of their declining economic fortunes. "It is precisely non-college-educated Americans," they point out, "in particular non-college-educated men, who have suffered the largest wage declines over the last two decades" and continued to lose ground even when the economy improved under Clinton.

The Republican crusade to dismantle the welfare state is filled with pitfalls, however. First, it is not really what most people want (though if nonvoting trends continue, it may still be what a majority of voters want). It is safe to say that most people want everyone, except children, the elderly or those who simply can't work or don't need to, to have a job that pays a decent wage. The ticket to entitlement, in the American mind, is still work, but there should be a right to work and reasonable pay.

But even the Senate welfare plan, though better than that passed by the House, does not provide adequate assistance to help people get off welfare. Rather than creating jobs, it merely expands the pool of unskilled workers desperately seeking jobs. In addition to ending the federal guarantee of support for poor families, Republican policies will make it harder for the working poor to earn a living wage. For example, the GOP opposes a minimum-wage hike and favors scaling back the earned-income tax credit, an income subsidy for low-income workers.

A second pitfall of Republican policies is their inability to raise the average worker's income or living standards, the key issue for most families and for society as a whole. For example, getting control of health care costs is essential, but the big question is whether it will be done through greater efficiency or through reducing care for the less affluent. Contrary to Republican expectations, moving more old people into HMOs will yield limited savings, especially compared to the savings that could be gained from an efficient single-payer national health system. Instead, most of the $270 billion Republicans want to cut from projected Medicare spending over seven years will be saved by simply reducing payments to doctors and hospitals.

Some price controls are justified, but the Republican plan will hit hardest among hospitals that serve the poor. In reforming Medicare, the Republicans have not been guided

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by health care needs or concern for adequate financing. Instead, they have been driven by the political goals of balancing the budget in seven years and granting $245 billion in tax cuts to the wealthy.

In recent years health care programs in Britain and Canada, often cited invidiously by Republicans as examples of state rationing, have allowed per capita spending increases of 3.6 to 3.9 percent each year. Congressional Republicans, by contrast, are allowing only 1.5 percent per capita growth each year. These Medicare restraints, combined with the Medicaid cuts that will threaten nursing home payments, will probably force older citizens to pay more and settle for less in medical care, and in many cases their children will suffer new financial burdens.

Compounding the damage of the Medicare cuts, the Republican plan to balance the budget is likely to depress economic growth by three-tenths of a percent per year, raising unemployment levels to as much as 8.5 percent. This, in turn, will reduce tax revenues and unbalance the budget by 2002, according to the WEFA Group, a prominent economic forecasting firm.

The pity is that socially responsible alternatives to the GOP's cuts abound. First, single-payer national health insurance could have increased benefits for everyone and contained costs. (Barring that, $90 billion in Medicare savings over seven years would make the system solvent.)

Second, there's room for huge cuts in the military budget, which in real terms is higher now than during almost all of the Cold War period except the Vietnam War and the Reagan buildup of the early 1980s.

Third, there's tax fairness, such as rejecting House-approved "corporate welfare" increases of more than $300 billion over the next 10 years and restoring the high-income Social Security tax (worth nearly $50 billion over 10 years). According to Citizens for Tax Justice, House-passed measures would increase taxes on families earning less than $10,000 a year by $25 while cutting taxes $12,600 a year for the richest 1 percent (those with annual incomes of more than $200,000).

Fourth, take stronger public health measures to reduce health costs, such as improving workplace safety and health enforcement, environmental protection and reduction of tobacco use. In each case, Republicans are moving in the opposite direction, thus raising long-term health expenses.

Finally, of course, raising workers' incomes reduces many welfare state expenditures, improves government finances and stimulates economic growth. The trustees of the Medicare Hospital Insurance fund noted earlier this year that their deficit projections are very sensitive to future real-wage growth: If wages grow, the "actuarial balance ... shows corresponding improvement."

Raising wages requires long-term increases in productivity, but Republican cuts in student loans, technology development and other already modest public investments undermine productivity. Increasing workers' pay also requires granting more power to workers to bargain, but the Republicans are further weakening labor-law enforcement and repealing prevailing wage laws that support service and construction worker wages.

In the short run, the Republican proposals will cause a lot of pain and even social chaos. In the long run, they are likely to be rejected by voters as unfair and ineffective. In a world where employment is increasingly unsettled, both blue- and white-collar workers have a stake in a more comprehensive welfare state—not its elimination. But a revived welfare state also must be flexible, and it must stress more active participation of people in determining their fate, not being pacified clients. Integrating tax refunds (effectively a guaranteeing a minimum income to families), the earned-income tax credit and income taxes into one progressive system offers several advantages along these lines. Such reforms could eliminate some of the stigma attached to welfare in the past, the disincentives to work the system created and the ponderous bureaucracy that ate up money that could otherwise go directly to individuals. Fighting against a flat tax and for progressivity will be a critical battle.

How quickly voters reject the Republican efforts to destroy the welfare state depends in large part on how well progressives can learn from the shortcomings of the past and provide an alternative that deals with the real problems of stagnation in living standards and inequality. The need for a welfare state has not disappeared, even if its supporters are now hard to find. ◀

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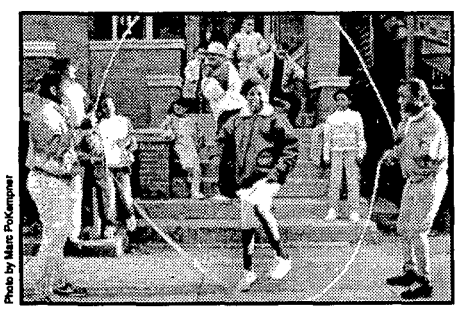


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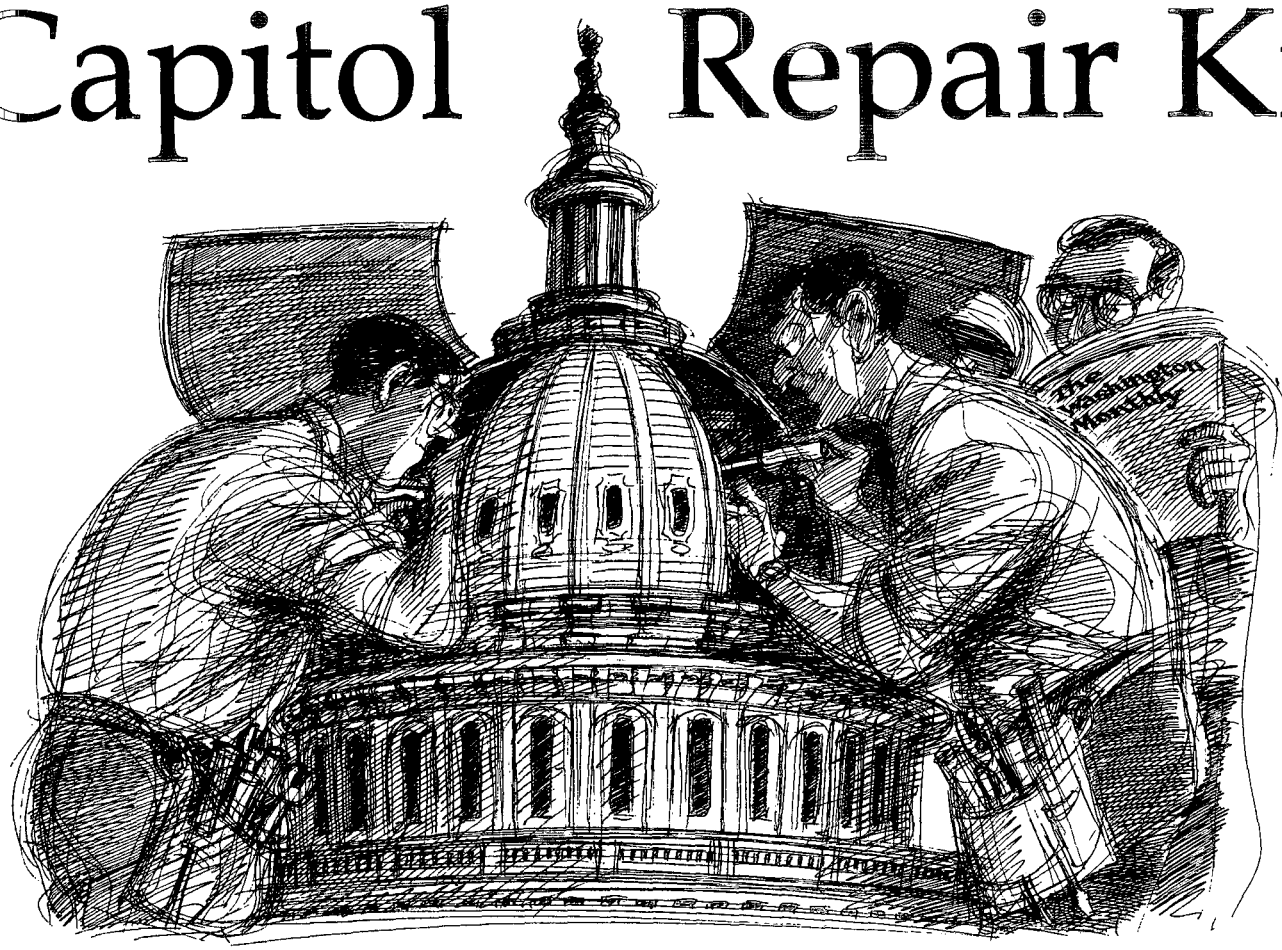
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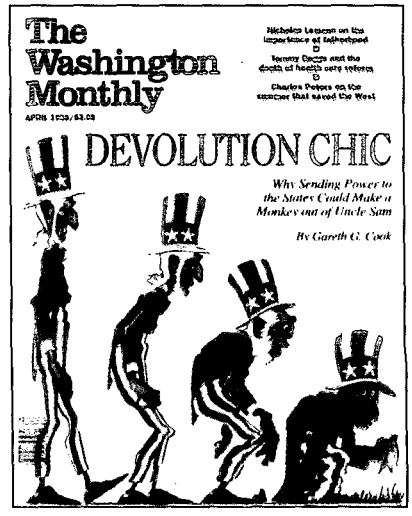
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POLITICS

Revising the "right to life"

The anti-abortion movement looks to expand its crusade into the rest of the life cycle.

By Eleanor J. Bader
NASHVILLE

As I headed to the registration table at the National Right to Life Committee (NRTLC) conference this June, I worried that my Brooklyn accent and Jewish face might betray me as an imposter. But no one from the predominantly Catholic organization blinked an eye. Instead, a smiling woman handed me a packet and urged me to browse the literature tables before the opening plenary began.

Inside the exhibit hall, pictures of fetal development were lined up alongside plastic models of "babies in utero." T-shirts, posters, buttons and bumper stickers proclaimed: "As the family goes, so goes the nation," "Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the Fruit of the Womb is His reward," and other such slogans. Black Americans for Life displayed their literature; the Diocese of Nashville handed out "chastity packets" with pledge cards reading: "From this day forward I will be sexually pure, practicing the virtue of chastity. And I will remain a virgin until the day I enter the sacrament of marriage."

Six years ago, when I last ventured into Right-to-Life Land, more than 1,500 delegates were on hand. This year only about 500 people attended the three-day conference. Even more surprising, at least half of them were over 50.

Since its founding in 1973 by the Family Life Division of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, the NRTLC has been the anti-abortion organization most heavily invested in lobbying and electoral work and most distant from militant groups such as Operation Rescue. The oldest and most staid of the pro-life groups, the NRTLC has always portrayed itself as an ecumenical organization, seeking the widest possible base to counter claims that it is trying to impose a Catholic agenda on a religiously pluralist nation. Indeed, unlike the U.S. bishops, the organization does not oppose nuclear war, capital punishment or artificial birth control and was, until recently, vehemently single-issue.

But this year's conference seemed, at least partially, to reflect the pope's stated revulsion for the worldwide "culture of death." Nearly every speaker addressed the need to "return to and maintain legal protection for all defenseless human beings." Many linked abortion, euthanasia and managed health care as a triumvirate of evil.

Drawing a direct line from abortion to new inequities such as medically assisted suicide, Tennessee Right to Life President Bruce Weaver employed doomsday rhetoric to appeal to the mostly aging, white middle-class audience. "We are all threatened by the lack of respect for human life. *Roe vs. Wade* was a death knell for babies, but its effect has spread out to all of us," he warned.

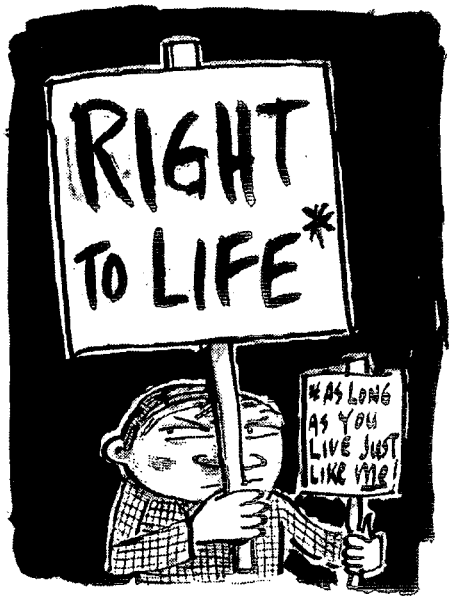
"Physicians used to believe that death was the enemy," echoed Carolyn Gerster, an Arizona cardiologist and former NRTLC president. "Now death is a colleague who walks down the hospital corridor." A powerful speaker, Gerster gripped her audience with stories of frail, elderly patients being denied food and water because their care was deemed too expensive. "When I was studying medicine, I never heard that we could kill what we could not cure. ... I never dreamed, at that time, that a doctor would become an executioner."

Lynda Harrington, head of Oregon Right to Life and a Democratic Party member, picked up the thread, noting that her state's voters passed the nation's first assisted-suicide bill in 1994. The measure remains stalled in the courts by an NRTLC-U.S. Catholic Conference lawsuit. "Doctors are fallible," Harrington said, noting that the bill allows suicide by injection for those with less than six months to live. "What if the doctor is wrong about this?"

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Other NRTLC leaders lambasted President Clinton's proposal for managed health care as a form of "involuntary euthanasia." "With managed care, make no mistake about it, there will be more management than care," warned attorney Burke Balch, the NRTLC's medical ethics director. "Decisions are made on a cost-benefit basis. This puts a dollar value on human life. ... When you put a dollar sign on human life, the price goes down."

But Balch's proposed solution to the problem hardly seemed adequate. He advanced an Individual Savings Account plan—a medical version of the Individual Retirement Account—under which people would buy annual vouchers, redeemable only for limited kinds of medical care. Supplemental care would cost extra. Those who couldn't buy into this system would not have the luxury of managed care—they would simply be uninsured.



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Of the 54 available workshops offered at the conference, perhaps the most promising for hard-line anti-abortionists was one on medical malpractice lawsuits for Post-Abortion Syndrome (PAS), a "disorder" that right-to-life advocates claim is marked by post-surgery depression, anxiety and frigidity. PAS litigation, which has resulted in at least one $7 million award, could bring big bucks to the anti-abortion cause. As New York pro-choice organizer Elena Montoya explains, 22 years after *Roe vs. Wade*, talk of "an abortion holocaust" has many women "wondering if they really are murderers." Most TV and radio evangelists, and even local parish priests, she adds, "regularly remind women who have aborted that they are guilty of killing their own children. It's not surprising that many people who were reared in, or now attend, traditional Catholic or fundamentalist churches feel the pressure and start to freak out."

Legal advocacy groups and peer group spinoffs of the NRTLC such as Women Exploited by Abortion and American Victims of Abortion encourage these women to speak out and seek retribution. According to an article in the March 13 issue of *Time* magazine, the abortion malpractice movement has gotten a boost from Life Dynamics, Inc. (LDI), a Texas-based legal network that helps women sue the doctors who performed their abortions. The brainchild of evangelist and marketing whiz Mark Crutcher, LDI has brought together 600 attorneys and 500 "expert witnesses" on everything from the use of "retained fetal parts" to PAS. In addition, many independent psychologists, psychiatrists, therapists and social workers have jumped on the PAS bandwagon.

For their part, pro-choice activists fear that litigators will play on jurors' hatred of doctors and sympathy for the "medically wronged"—in this case, women who have freely chosen to have abortions—and that abortion clinics will be unable to bear the financial burden of defending themselves even against suits they ultimately win. Further aggravating these concerns is the Supreme Court trend toward restricting access to abortion. *Planned Parenthood vs. Casey*, a 1993 Supreme Court decision, held that states could require women under 18 to get the "informed consent" of at least one parent before obtaining an abortion, and found that a mandated 24-hour interval between seeing a doctor and having abortion surgery was constitutional.

Anti-abortion gains have been significant. Seven states now enforce such waiting periods, 25 have parental involvement laws, and only 15 provide Medicaid coverage for abortions for the poor. As of October 1994, only 13 percent of U.S. medical schools offered abortion as part of their standard curriculum—although the Accreditation Council on Graduate Medical Education has mandated that as of Jan. 1, 1996, obstetrics and gynecology residency programs include abortion training for all students except those with moral or religious objections.

The small number of trained abortion providers creates further obstacles. Twenty-seven percent of women who need the procedure have to travel 50 or more miles to find a clinic or other facility to perform it. Safety is also an issue. In Nevada, Dr. Damon Stutes, the only doctor performing abortions in a 200,000-square-mile area, has been threatened so often that he wears a bulletproof vest and carries a loaded gun. His clinic has steel doors, bullet-resistant windows, infrared motion detectors and panic buttons.

These statistics on the waning availability of abortion bolstered the enthusiasm of the 500 diehards who attended the conference. Viewing themselves as part of a larger movement—"the last line of defense against the forboding Culture of Death," as Richard Land, a Baptist minister, put it—they seemed thoroughly convinced that it was only a matter of time before their self-appointed task of changing America's ethical direction was complete. Indeed, the NRTLC's inclusion of concerns such as assisted suicide and managed health care may mark a politically savvy realization that abortion alone cannot sustain a mass movement. As I left the conference, I found myself wondering if its shrunken size indicated that moderate anti-abortion groups such as the NRTLC have been hurt by the movement's increasing militancy, or simply reflected the fact that right-wing, multi-issue groups have incorporated abortion into their agendas. Whatever the case, I walked out the door suspecting that the battle will continue for many years ahead. ◀

Eleanor J. Bader is a Brooklyn-based teacher and freelance writer.

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DIALOGUE

The true alternative

By Jeff vonKaenel

Twenty-two years ago, I walked into the little office that the *Santa Barbara News & Review* shared with a carpet cleaning business. It was decorated in classic early American dirt, complete with furniture that even the thrift store wouldn't take back. I was applying for a reporting job at the local alternative weekly newspaper.

The newspaper was run by a collective—each member did a stint at every job. I handed my résumé to the member who happened to be staffing the front desk. After carefully looking over my résumé, this staffer offered me a job. As I was congratulating myself on my good fortune, I heard the next words, "You know, we can't pay you anything." I took the job anyway. I worked until my savings ran out and then went back to San Jose to sell Fuller Brush products door to door so I could afford to return to work at the newspaper. I met my future wife that year at the *News & Review*. She worked as a production artist and was living in her car.

Now, 22 years later, I'm still working at an alternative newspaper. My wife and I are the majority owners of three alternative papers in California and Nevada. As someone who has been actively involved with the alternative press over the last two decades, I was stunned to read David Armstrong's piece ("Alternative, Inc.," August 21) in which he glorifies the good old days of the underground press—"vehicles designed to empower a constituency"—and claims that today's alternatives are simply "businesses designed to penetrate a market."

It's just not that simple. I was there in the "good old days." Believe me, they were not so good. Employees were often exploited, much of the writing was awful, and the circulation was so insignificant that the papers had little impact. In his story, Armstrong accuses the alternative press, particularly the chains, of casting off their roots and moving to the mainstream. That is not how I would describe the last 22 years. In 1973, we dreamed of creating an alternative paper that would cover controversial issues, allow different voices to be heard, make our communities a better place to live and permit us to make a decent living. The dilemma we faced then, and that most progressive organizations face now, was how to survive in a capitalist economy.

To make our progressive newspaper successful economically, we had to beat the competition. Our ad department had to sell a little better, our distribution staff had to be a little faster and our design department had to be more creative. Our editorial department had to produce miracles on a shoestring budget. I have done papers with money and without money. You can do a better paper with money. It is much easier to print an investigative story about someone rich and powerful when you have libel insurance. It is much easier to recruit first-rate reporters when you can pay them a decent wage and provide benefits. Because the alternative press has been able to compete for advertising dollars, we have become a force to be reckoned with.

Our *News & Review* papers compete with three of the largest newspaper chains in the country—Donrey, McClatchy and Gannett. And these chains play hardball. Donrey started a pseudo-alternative newsweekly to go up against us. McClatchy started a new entertainment weekly in Sacramento, offering special introductory ad rates. We moved into a Gannett market six months ago, and already we have received a threatening letter from Gannett's corporate office in Arlington, Va.

We have not only managed to survive, we have done well. We produce three very good newspapers with a combined circulation of 155,000 and an annual payroll of more than $2 million. But this economic stability has not come at the price of editorial independence or rootedness in the local community, as David Armstrong suggests. In fact, economic stability has allowed us to do a better job, supporting institutions that can make a difference in our communities. And our success has been repeated across the country. Now there are 104 members of the Association of Alternative Newsweeklies (AAN), with a combined weekly circulation of 6 million. And the alternative press, including New Times, Inc., puts out much more interesting papers than Armstrong and his colleagues do at the monotone *San Francisco Examiner*—all at a fraction of the cost.

In his attack on the alternative press, Armstrong talks

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about the money to be made in publishing alternative papers. He cites the successful New Times, Inc. chain, with its six alternative newspapers. But the business history of the alternative press is not one of easy success but, rather, of repeated failure. If you took the owners of the two biggest built-from-scratch chains—Jim Larkin, Mike Lacey, Hal Smith and Scott Spear of New Times, Inc., and Steven Mindich and Barry Morris of the *Boston Phoenix*—and told them to apply the same business savvy, the same work ethic, the same aggressiveness to the widget industry that they have applied to their alternative papers, I believe they would be widget kings and making a hell of a lot more money in widgets than they do in alternative newspapers.

So why stay in the alternative newspaper business? I will never forget the thrill I had in Santa Barbara when we were able to bring together students in Isla Vista, Mexican restaurant workers in Santa Barbara, rich environmentalists in Montecito and blue-collar workers in Goleta, and have them all talk to and about each other within our paper.

The same thrill has been repeated for me in all three of our current papers in Sacramento, Chico and Reno. In our pages we discuss racism, violence, love, peace, war, politics and censorship. We've printed commentaries from radical environmentalists and Klan members. Our reporters have lived in tunnels under our cities and spent time in prisons. We've hosted community forums and gone into elementary schools to teach kids to write.

Twenty-two years ago, when I applied for a reporting job at the *Santa Barbara News & Review*, I was ready to change the world. Now, I believe more than ever that good journalism can change the world. But now, as opposed to then, we have some resources to make it happen. ◀

Jeff **vonKaenel** is publisher of the News & Review and president of the Association of Alternative Newsweeklies.

No alternative

By **David Armstrong**

Jeff vonKaenel misses the point. My piece was not "an attack on the alternative press," but a critique of papers that purport to be alternative and aren't. Contrary to vonKaenel's claims, most AAN papers spend a good deal more time celebrating rock bands and selling personals than they do muckraking the power elite or midwifing newborn visions of society. So now, after 22 years, vonKaenel owns three newspapers.

Twenty-five years after starting out at the alternative *Syracuse New Times* (not part of New Times, Inc.), I am a working reporter and not a newspaper proprietor. It may seem crazy from the chain publisher's perspective to criticize alternatives for forming chains. But from the grass roots, most AAN papers look a lot like the corporate papers they compete with, only smaller and even more self-congratulatory. ◀

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IN THE ARTS

The color of money

The Hughes brothers delve further into the chaos of race and crime in America.

By Pat Dowell

Dead Presidents is a movie with Dostoevskian ambitions—a harrowing study of a crime in the making and the blind social forces at work on a tormented soul. The crime is the heist of an armored car loaded with currency ready for the incinerator, and it is just getting under way when the movie fades back to tell the life that led up to it, that of Bronx teenager Anthony Curtis, who is played by Larenz Tate. Tate was unforgettable as the trigger-happy cherub O-Dog in *Menace II Society*, the spectacular 1993 debut of Albert and Allen Hughes, the twins who produced and directed *Dead Presidents*.

Dead Presidents, like *Menace*, presents a sympathetic portrait of a young black man's violent decline and fall. Anthony is about to finish high school when the movie tracks back to his relatively innocent youth in 1968. Like so many other black filmmakers nowadays, such as Spike Lee in *Crooklyn* and Carl Franklin in *Devil in a Blue Dress*, the Hughes brothers place their hero in a nostalgic recreation of a supportive African-American neighborhood—in this case, the South Bronx—that is soon to disintegrate. Anthony is not a bad kid; he's got a brother in college and a stable family life, but he doesn't have much of a plan. And, as a young African-American man in the era of Vietnam, he needs one.

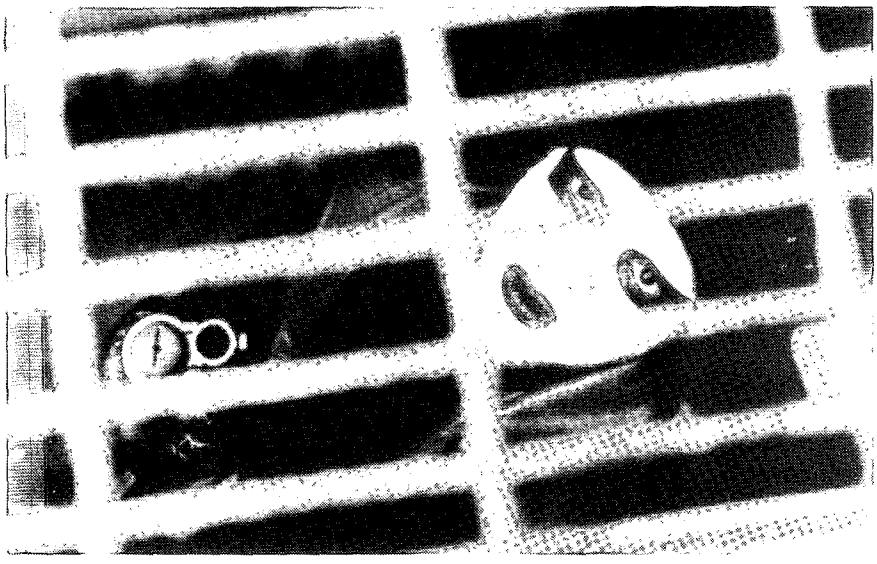
Anthony and his pals Skippy (Chris Tucker, in an inspired portrait of a wise-ass) and José, a Puerto Rican (Freddy Rodriguez), are just average kids. Despite the care of upright parents and the tutelage of Kirby (played by Keith David), a savvy mentor-numbers runner in the local pool hall, they soon get chewed up by adulthood. Anthony enlists in the Marines, naively imagining it as his ticket to manhood and independence. Skippy and José are drafted. Their horrific tour in Vietnam gives way to a dispiriting return home, a drift into poverty and, ultimately, the planning of one big-time caper, the heist that provides the film's prologue and climax. Nothing could be simpler, except that the Hughes brothers and screenwriter Michael Henry Brown have hung on this basic structure a mythology of black experience in the Vietnam era.

They get much of it right, but what's distressing about the Hughes brothers is how close they still hew to the conventions of exploitation. To be sure, graphic violence is a central and legitimate device in many parts of the Hughes' stories, but they consistently push the limits of artistic license. Their Vietnam War, for instance, is a combination of the worst imaginings of *Platoon* and *Apocalypse Now*, with a recon unit that, in its orgiastic fury and haunted moments of menacing quiet, seems to have receded further into madness than Col. Kurtz himself.

The war's insanity is presented in graphic detail. The camera lingers on mangled corpses, one soldier takes a head for a trophy and good luck charm, and, when a soldier is found on the jungle floor disemboweled and with his genitals stuffed in his mouth, there is a close-up of his mutilated guts—and of his filled mouth. The victim of this atrocity in *Dead Presidents* is, remarkably, still alive and has to be carried out. He begs for death, which Anthony reluctantly supplies with a painkiller overdose. This development proves to be an ironic foreshadowing when the movie next shifts to Anthony's return to a neighborhood nodding out from an overdose of the same narcotics.

That kind of simultaneous contrast and similarity is the thread that runs through all of *Dead Presidents*: between the use of drugs that are legal in one context but not another, between war and crime, between Kirby's relatively harmless numbers racket and the dealing of drugs. At times, what

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Dead Presidents
Produced and directed by
Albert and Allen Hughes

sets these off is a hair's breadth of difference; at other times, it's a moral chasm. Gazing in wonder at the obsolescent cash known as dead presidents, Skippy says, "They were going to burn all this shit, and a nigger can't even find a job." In its close charting of these differences, *Dead Presidents*, for all its flaws, serves as a powerful comment on the moral corrosion of American society.

But the flaws do eat at you. When Anthony comes back to the Bronx in 1973, honorable small-time crooks like Kirby have been driven out of business by the escalating cost of police bribes and by the ascendance of more menacing drug dealers, one of whom has befriended the mother of Anthony's child. Here the screenplay takes a more discouragingly exploitative turn: It becomes evident that Anthony's real problem is facing society's challenges to his manhood, and these, not surprisingly, take overtly sexual (and hence sexist) forms. The tests of Anthony's manhood come not only from the drug dealer, who humiliates him in a hallway, sticking a gun barrel to his mouth and commanding him to suck it, but from the women in his life. Most egregiously, the woman he lives with (and the mother of his child) starts to whine about their circumstances, and threatens to leave him if he doesn't start "bringing in some real money like a real man." Among the audience of young African-Americans with whom I saw *Dead Presidents*, the vocal sentiment was that Anthony should "break the bitch's neck," and it wasn't clear from watching the movie that the Hughes brothers didn't agree, even though they and Anthony refrained from doing it.

Misogyny seemed a dormant, half hinted-at element of *Menace II Society*, but it blossoms in *Dead Presidents*. In the movie's earlier scenes, Anthony's mother is disapproving of his choice of the Marines over college, and the scene indicates in small ways that she seems to have his father cowed. She comes off as less nurturing than demanding, a figure we're invited to dislike even though her reservations about Anthony's choice prove to be right. When he returns from the war, he is greeted by his girlfriend's sister Delilah (N'Bushe Wright), grown up into a newborn revolutionary, allied with a leather-jacketed party that is the Black Panthers in everything but name. Delilah ridicules Anthony's political naiveté, but befriends him. Trained in handling firearms, she is brought into the heist, and when the movie again takes up the scene of the armored-car robbery, it is she who is filled with such bloodlust that she opens up in two-gun fury on the guards, initiating a bloodbath that rivals in its art and fury the work of Sam Peckinpah.

The robbery is the bleeding heart of *Dead Presidents*, and a brilliant piece of work it is, set up as a kind of parallel episode to the Vietnam War sequence in the movie. In an unexplained but memorably symbolic choice of disguise, the conspirators are done up in whiteface, each one looking like a Kabuki mask (or a demented mime). From the tense moments before they make their move, coming out of hiding places around a quiet and lonely loading dock, to the explosion that blows up the truck, to the anarchic aftermath that finds the robbers pouring down a street full of terrified pedestrians as sirens scream all around them, it is as pure an expression of rage and chaos as anything anyone has put on the screen since *The Wild Bunch*. This is the art of violence as Peckinpah pioneered it, a vision of raw human impulses shattered into a hundred momentary glimpses of angry detail—horrifying collisions, a splatter of red on a white-painted face, terror, flight, madness—all seemingly frozen by the strobe light of a camera.

Anthony's life, both his choices and those events foisted on him, has led him to this. The movie chronicles nothing more or less than the evolution of a criminal, a felon and, yes, the black man who most preoccupies white America—in that sense the Hughes brothers are oddly driven by white expectations. But Anthony and his progeny are a great mystery for black America, too. He is the father figure to the prototypical characters in *Menace II Society*: the teenage gang member of the '90s. And what remains unclear in this movie is what seemed fuzzy at the end of that film: the Hughes brothers' ultimate feelings about these young men. Both films are too comfortable with the ghetto machismo of their heroes and lamentably ill at ease with any woman who doesn't conform to the most basic instincts of men (something else the Hughes' have in common with Peckinpah). But the Hughes brothers are poets too, and, just like Peckinpah, they are troubled and troubling ones. They are still disarmingly young (not yet 25) and hold tremendous promise for turning a mature and unflinching eye on the tragedy of America, and they are, I hope, just getting started. ◀

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IN PRINT

For appearances' sake

By Jennifer Jones

Beauty, a notoriously subjective notion, has been a particularly troublesome proposition for feminists. The traditional hard line—forcefully laid out in Naomi Wolf's 1991 bestseller *The Beauty Myth*—holds that beauty is an ingenious form of psychic captivity, designed to keep women in thrall to the male gaze, to the multibillion-dollar cosmetics and fashion industries and to a cruel body ideal of sickly thinness.

Yet the feminist stake in the beauty question is inevitably more complex. In addition to serving as a powerful mode of oppression, beauty is also a private matter, concerning the intimate question of self-perception and drawing out a host of elusive qualities (such as character, virtue and love) in its wake. Thinking about beauty, then, coaxes forth some of the most stubbornly unresolved—and all too often unexamined—paradoxes issuing from the feminist axiom that the personal is political.

Two recent books plumb both poles of these paradoxes. Ellen Lambert, a literary scholar and educator, claims beauty as a positive feminist concern in *The Face of Love*. S. Paige Baty, a professor of politics and women's studies at Williams College, seeks to expose the role of the iconic American beauty, Marilyn Monroe, in the making of the American body politic. Baty's postmodern rendering of Monroe's ghostly presence in American culture suggests the ways that not only beauty but individuals themselves are commodified as they circulate through the mass media. Baty's disturbing portrait of Monroe is jarringly at odds with Lambert's personal and heartfelt story of recovery through the gradual acceptance of our bodies' beauty—the embrace of identity that Lambert calls, in self-help lingo, "the face of love."

Distancing herself from the arguments of Wolf and other feminist critics of beauty, Lambert insists that a concern with beauty should not be theorized as a pernicious "male problem" that liberated women should move beyond in the quest for autonomy and equality. Lambert argues instead that "the beauty question, the question of appearances, is *my* issue too, is *our* issue as women, is indeed *anyone's* issue as a human being. For the question of who one is on the outside is intimately bound up with who one is on the inside; appearances are a very part of our identity."

"We need not feel guilty, as feminists," she suggests, "if we care about appearance. In fact, beauty matters to me precisely as a feminist issue." For Lambert, beauty is not so much a capitalist plot or patriarchal ploy as "the outward expression of an inner harmony." She insists that true beauty is necessarily subjective and contingent because it is a product of love, both the experience of feeling loved and of loving in turn. Therefore, the recipe for beauty can never be found in women's magazines: It doesn't require capturing the male gaze or procuring the right color of eye shadow, it requires, according to Lambert, changing "our feelings about ourselves ... then we can change our appearances."

If that were all Lambert had to say about beauty, her book might as well be titled *Ten Steps to a More Beautiful You* and would probably soar to the top of the bestseller list. At the core of the book, however, lie three moving and original essays on the role of beauty in 19th-century novels by women. In rereading these works, Lambert finds that discussions of beauty and appearance consume a great deal of attention and often provide the main movement of the plot. The "merely pretty" woman wins out over her handsomer rival in the novels of Jane Austen, and women of "difficult beauty" (either too small in stature in Charlotte Brontë's fiction or too large in George Eliot's) are finally recognized in each novelist's work as the possessors of true beauty and character. Far from hewing to older stereotypes of the 19th-century bourgeois heroine as decorous object, Lambert finds that many female novelists valued appearance in a way "that was not destructive to a woman's self-esteem."



The Face of Love: Feminism and the Beauty Question
By Ellen Zetzel Lambert
Beacon Press
236 pp., $24

American Monroe: The Making of a Body Politic
By S. Paige Baty
University of California Press
197 pp., $15

Entwined throughout these suggestive readings of fiction is Lambert's narration of her own struggle with the beauty question, ranging from her transformation into an "ugly child" upon her mother's untimely death to her mastectomy and ultimate acceptance of aging. Although this interpolation of the personal provides her story with passion, her subjective position as a white, middle-aged American woman also opens up a series of potential problems. Lam-

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bert gestures to the ways in which race, age and sexual preference shape women's responses to the beauty question. But she could have done more to examine the gulf between her life as a 20th-century American woman and those of the fictional 19th-century heroines and real-life novelists she describes. Lambert fails to examine the ways women's identities are structured differently in postmodern America than they were in the 19th century. She also neglects the broader economic and political culture of contemporary America that shapes "the male gaze" and our subjective sense of self. Lambert's analysis would be even richer if, instead of sidestepping Naomi Wolf, she had situated her readings of both 19th- and 20th-century women within a critique of modern mass commercial culture that acknowledges that, at least for young women, Maybelline and *Seventeen* may be as seductive as *Middlemarch* and *Jane Eyre*.

Some may consider *The Face of Love*'s faith in human agency naive. But the book's affirmation of the corporeal as an important root of our identity places Lambert at the forefront of an important new area of feminist research and theory that is beginning, at last, to take women's bodies seriously without trapping them in politically dangerous notions of the essential female. By reclaiming the vivid ways in which beauty can be understood as a quality of the spirit—even in a culture dominated by images of MTV vixens and willowy supermodels—Lambert has produced an eloquent plea for the enduring uses of beauty in feminist discourse.



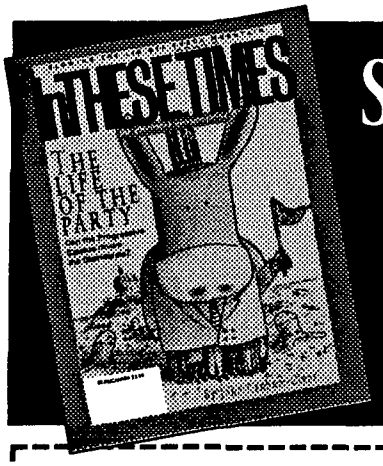
The value of Lambert's obdurate subjectivity stands out in high relief against S. Paige Baty's obsessive attention to the mass media in *American Monroe*. Indeed, Baty's ironic dissection of the modern American body politic is seemingly devoid of the "personal" altogether. Baty presents instead a closed world in which elusive celluloid simulacra replace real individuals, and linear life histories are disrupted and fragmented via the mass media.

American Monroe focuses on the ways in which Marilyn Monroe has, since her death in 1962, continued to live on in the American mass media, continuously reinterpreted as icon of the American dream, sex goddess, communist spy, president's mistress, dumb blonde, feminist, bitch and corpse. Not only is Monroe impersonated by rock stars, printed on coffee mugs and resurrected by *Life* magazine retrospectives, she has become, claims Baty, an important part of the body politic. Until we understand how celebrities like Marilyn Monroe function in our cultural imagination, Baty claims, we will not be able to begin to critique the virtual community, the postmodern body politic in which we live as late 20th-century American "citizens."

Like Elvis, the Kennedys and other American celebrities, Monroe endures in American culture because of her status as a "representative character." In Baty's words, she "operates as a site on which American political culture is written and exchanged." That is, Monroe serves as a sort of cultural currency, which permits millions of Americans who have no contact with one another to "become members of the same community because they are literate in the network of stories, characters, and figures that populate the terrain of the mass-mediated common ground."

Baty's book should not be mistaken, however, for a popular history of memories of Monroe. Baty is not particularly concerned with popular culture, individual perceptions of Monroe or the broader world outside the media. Rather, she is interested, à la Foucault, in "the mass-mediated modes of ordering power and knowledge in these remem-

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berings, regardless of potential popular intervention and transformations."

Distinguishing between four different modes of remembering Monroe, Baty examines in turn the mass media's transformation of Marilyn into an icon to be easily disseminated and mechanically reproduced; her biographers' recreation of her life story; conspiracy theorists' obsession with Marilyn's ostensible threat, as mistress to JFK, to the body politic; and finally, the ways in which the media have represented Marilyn's corpse and made sense of her death. Baty finds that all of these modes of remembering Monroe share a distinctive feature: representative figures who live through the media become hybrid figures with fragmented selves. Indebted to Fredric Jameson's work on the cultural logic of late capitalism, Baty describes the virtual world of the media as breaking down distinctions between public and private, politics and culture, female and male, power and knowledge, past and future. In the media, "Teleologies are undone as past, present, and future are rewired into a circulated common ground of mass-mediated memory." As Baty concludes, "The 'real Marilyn' is an oxymoron: she mediates the real by being a simulation of herself." In Baty's vision of America's media-driven politics, not only is the personal removed; the people have vanished altogether.

Although Baty evocatively analyzes the different modes by which the mass media remember figures like Monroe, her arguments are much less convincing when it comes to the broader issue of the nature of the postmodern body politic and of the role of feminist theory in political critique. Baty acknowledges that media images are not themselves enough to sustain even a "virtual democracy," and that we need to find a political language that is fluent in both the schizophrenic virtual reality of the media and in real human needs. Yet she is ultimately unclear about how this might be done. Her primary suggestion is that we need to pay more attention to the language and modes of remembering deployed by the mass media: "We need what the television screen needs if it is to make the world around us visible: sharper definition(s)."

Having effectively disregarded the boisterous life and tragic death of a real American woman named Norma Jean Baker, Baty leaves the reader with the impression that our only hope of participating in virtual democracy is not only to plug into the mass media, but to become one with them: If Monroe is merely "a simulation of herself," then we, presumably, have become the Trinitrons on which she is projected.

Baty's study certainly does provide a sharper definition of the media's workings. Nevertheless, her hermetic focus on the matrix of the media leaves a good deal out of the picture. As Lambert's own reflective, personal study reminds us, there are still real human bodies in the body politic with ideas of their own about what they are viewing. ◀

Jennifer Jones is an assistant professor of history at Rutgers University.

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Pox populi

By **Chris Lehmann**

Presidential elections have become such frenetic and squalid spectacles that it is often difficult to set them straight in our memory. When did Mondale concede he would actually raise taxes? Or was it Dukakis? Was it "our long national nightmare" or the brief flirtation with "malaise" that preceded "morning in America"? Why did anyone ever care about the Panama Canal? Who was John Anderson's running mate? Surely not that senile admiral guy....

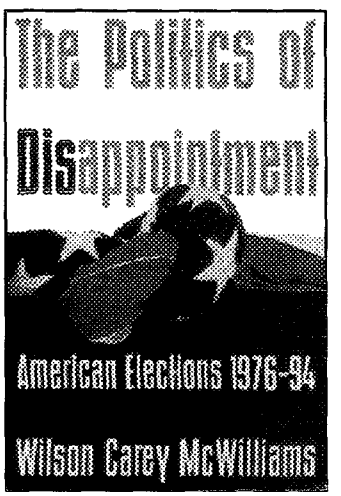
A glance back at recent elections can produce much the same effect that a certain kind of hangover can in the wake of a melancholy bender: equal parts depression, disorientation and self-disgust. Yet this very sense of queasy ennui—which is already returning with the bilious advent of the 1996 election season—begs to be sorted out in a more dispassionate and clear-headed way. For, as unsightly as they've been, the American presidential elections of the past 20 years have ushered in dramatic changes in how Americans think about politics, government, leadership and participation in civic life.

Wilson Carey McWilliams splendidly captures the nature of these changes—and the alternately dour and hopeful character of the national mood—in the essays collected in *The Politics of Disappointment*. A political science professor at Rutgers University—and son of longtime *Nation* editor Carey McWilliams—McWilliams specializes in a brand of analysis that has been all but run out of his arid and positivist discipline. Rather than charting demographic breakdowns of the electorate with the blind fever of a medieval alchemist, McWilliams focuses on the actual content of presidential campaigns, taking them as rough but nonetheless revealing readings of the health of the American democratic experiment.

McWilliams' contemporaneous accounts of the last five presidential elections—as well as the 1994 off-year elections, which McWilliams addresses in his closing chapter—trace the steady decline of the party system and the rise to prominence of "cultural" questions. Both trends, in McWilliams' view, highlight the isolation of the American voter, not merely from organized politics, but from any larger sense of a public life worth preserving. Writing of the distinct emergence of a culturally minded politics in the 1976 campaign—which pitted Jimmy Carter's religiously informed social conservatism against Gerald Ford's embrace of the GOP's religious right—McWilliams cast a prescient eye on the larger shifts in American political discourse. "Cultural" issues—which then, as now, revolved around matters of morality and the family formerly considered outside the province of the liberal state—posed an uneasy dilemma for many voters and politicians. In isolating this troubled theme in the otherwise forgettable campaign of 1976, McWilliams offered an assessment of the electoral mood that still rings true today. Americans, he observed, "are hard pressed to maintain any psychological or moral autonomy. A growing number of Americans simply drift in the social current, relating to others only through style and image, making few deep commitments, finding little intimacy and less meaning."

To some readers, this analysis might sound a note of quasi-spiritual prophecy suspiciously akin to what now goes by the name of "the politics of meaning." But unlike adherents of that mushy notion, who tend to favor state-sponsored therapeutic intervention into the lives of citizens, McWilliams sees more engagement in the homely business of civic life—emphatically including revived, local political parties—as essential to the reconstruction of our citizenry's blighted sense of community. "Political parties can themselves—through local organization and citizen participation—be part of a new network of ties among citizens," McWilliams writes. "Political parties have done more than express the needs and feelings of citizens. They have educated them in the norms and values of democratic politics."

Of course, the elections from 1980 on all savagely refuted any hopes for revitalized party politics. With the breakup of the Democrats' New Deal coalition—which, whatever its considerable faults, helped sustain those elemental bonds of citizen to party—candidates like Carter (and, now, Clinton) could position themselves as "outsiders" to Washington and party politics alike. Meanwhile, the sprawling system of primaries—originally conceived as a means of freeing the hold of corrupt party bosses on the nominating process—has fatally ossified the selection of presidential candidates. The primaries, instituted initially as an adjunct to state nominating conventions, have complete-



The Politics of Disappointment: American Elections, 1976-1994
By Wilson Carey McWilliams
Chatham House
211 pp., $17.95

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ly swallowed the other mechanisms for selecting candidates. Indeed, it now taxes our imaginations to recall that as recently as 1968, the Democrats nominated a candidate who had not won a single primary, and in 1952 fielded a candidate who had not even entered one. Far from opening up presidential nominations, the primary system, now bloated with winner-take-all innovations such as "Super Tuesday" and "superdelegates," has consolidated the rule of national party leaders and made campaigns much more reliant on media exposure and massive infusions of money. As a result, the entire process has drifted further out of the control of voters, and democratic deliberation has been degraded into mere spectacle. "In political calculations, cultivating elites counts for more," McWilliams writes, "and developing personal relationships with voters for less: American politics, like the American economy, is becoming increasingly capital intensive rather than labor intensive."

Other commentators have also taken anguished note of these developments, yet many of them are drawn to blanket condemnations of the "corruption" and "arrogance" of governing elites. These qualities are undeniably abundant, but they say much more about what might be called, for lack of a better term, the supply side of American politics (the monolithic power of the political establishment) than about the demand side (the aspirations of American voters)—which is where, after all, any genuine impetus for reform has to come from. McWilliams, by attending to the crucial nexus of citizen and government, is able to draw forth the telling details in elections that suggest, however dimly, what it is that Americans want from their government. Even in analyzing the 1994 election's pronounced antigovernment mood, McWilliams finds an instructive paradox:

> Even when government works, it reminds voters—and not always subtly—of their dependence on it, so that any perceived failure is an invitation to indignation. The anger of Americans at government, however, is a mark of their need for it. Less government would not 'empower' citizens, it would only leave them subject to the dominations and powers of the market, technology, and international society. By contrast, the results of the election of 1994 show that the public *has* power over government and in politics. But this very power makes government a target for resentment, especially in a liberal society historically suspicious of the public sector.

To be sure, he continues, the response of voters in 1994 was simply "a sort of bow in the direction of party government and accountability ... largely negative, inarticulate, and without commitment." But it is the sort of response we can continue to expect from a political process that prompts many citizens to "turn away, if only in a despairing assertion of dignity."

There are still opportunities for Democrats to take such despair to heart and frame a renewed commitment to the neglected politics of equality, which McWilliams calls the party's "enduring grail." The cause of equality should not be mistaken, however, for the merely tactical "populism" marketed by Clinton and his chief adviser James Carville in 1992; nor, McWilliams cautions, should it be conscripted into an identity politics that promotes a value-free ideology recognizing no qualitative distinctions among citizens nor (for that matter) any positive conception of the good life in a democratic polity.

McWilliams stresses that equality, contrary to liberal orthodoxy, carries with it a "collective obligation" requiring genuine sacrifice rather than the routine invocation of rights-based rhetoric. Membership in society "makes citizens participants of the whole of a political society's life, including its heritage." When that heritage includes racial injustice, for example, McWilliams writes that "all Americans have an obligation to make those sacrifices that are necessary to atone. The burdens this involves should be shared as equally as possible: Working-class whites in cities like Yonkers should not be expected to welcome low-income housing when rich, neighboring cities like Scarsdale are left alone. When individual Americans suffer loss in the interest of racial equality, however, it is no different in principle from conscription, which may call some to serve in times of war while leaving others at home. Every citizen has a civic calling to repay his or her debt to the common life."

This language of obligation, atonement and civic calling no doubt falls strangely on the ears of citizens who have grown accustomed to viewing political life as cynical spectators. But while this vision of equality is far from fashionable, it cannot be dismissed as simply old-fashioned. Indeed, McWilliams argues, it holds forth the promise of stanching the losing, rearguard battle to secure meaningful racial justice that liberals now have all but abandoned. Nor are such lessons limited to the politics of race: One of the only hopeful messages to be gleaned from H. Ross Perot's candidacy in 1992, with its obsessive focus on owning up to the real costs of the federal deficit, is that many American voters are wearying of being ritually spoonfed a politics shorn of any but the barest conception of obligation and sacrifice.

A more richly conceived politics of equality has recently gained a much stronger appeal with the growing polarization of wealth and income in America. Yet the Democrats remain largely deaf to this crucial development. Clinton's neoliberalism "plays down any appeal to class conflict and cultivates corporate support," McWilliams writes. "It is not entirely surprising, though it is certainly arresting, that half of the respondents in one [1994] poll identified the Democrats as the party of 'the rich.' " In view of this appalling transformation, McWilliams' plea for a renewed civic life sounds much less utopian: It is, rather, a pressing means of rebuilding party politics, painstakingly, from the ground up.

Indeed, it is McWilliams' singular strength to invite readers to view political life with something more than an increasingly refined disgust. And like all principled democrats, he insistently reminds us that a vital politics depends most of all on our own abilities to imagine and sustain a public life. Even in the worst-case scenario, *The Politics of Disappointment* is a bracing tonic for the hangover yet to come. ◀

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York (so much more *real* than L.A.), but in truth the show has all the gritty urban feel of a church meeting in Des Moines. These happy youngsters are never beset by the usual New York traumas (crime, the homeless, rude cabbies), mostly because they never go outside. Unlike their older, more neurotic counterparts on *Seinfeld*—who are constantly setting foot to pavement, only to be menaced by other New Yorkers—these Manhattanites are hermetically sealed within the confines of their homey apartments or their even homier hangout, Central Perk (gulp) Coffee House.

It's a safe place, eerily free of the real-world trials and anxieties that fuel adult comedy, which depends on risky stuff like ethnic or sexual tension, for example, to make it soar. Of course, there's nary a dark skin to be found in this New York, where any intruder (invariably a current or ex-romantic partner of a Friend) is regarded by the magic six as vaguely icky, and by the audience as an unwanted distraction from *Friends'* ongoing platonic love-fest. Ross' ex-wife and her lesbian lover, for example, are beautiful and bitchy, but we're meant to distrust them—not primarily because they're gay (that wouldn't be very nice), but because they're so clearly grown up; they're frankly sexual; they don't giggle and go all, like, goofy; they wear high heels and seem to have real jobs. In other words, they just don't want to play.

Finally, what appeals about *Friends* has nothing to do with real life, to which it bears little resemblance, unless you're the sort of lucky person whose biggest worry is getting over a bad haircut. Rather, it's about the very real fantasy of not having to grow up. Yes, nasty things have happened to these characters (Ross' ex-wife, Rachel's snobby family), but it's nothing that can't be cured by a rousing round of wisecracks with your friends—the vaunted "witty" banter that really boils down to a steady barrage of fairly juvenile insults: Chandler's endless put-downs of the dimwitted Joey; Phoebe's endless tweaking of the "control-ly" and tight-assed Monica; Monica's endless eye-rolling over Phoebe's cracked "insights." Naturally, all of this rampant hostility is canceled out in the final moments with a round of hugs or a sudden burst of sincerity. "Oh, I *love you*," a tearful Rachel proclaims after a misunderstanding with Monica over Ross' new girlfriend. Monica: "I love you, too!" (tears and hugs). Phoebe: Guys, I know this has nothing to do with me, but I love you guys, too!" (more hugs).

Maybe this *is* the way people treat each other now, sarcasm and the quick emotional fix having become our national rhetoric in the postmodern world, as if the best time you could hope for would be the kind you enjoyed at a high school sleepover or a college frat party. Pointedly child-like (and childish), it's the sort of behavior that protects you from having to deal with all the risky emotions and disturbing thoughts that come with feeling deeply—or laughing honestly. TV comedy routinely hands us this stuff, but the shows we remember (from *The Honeymooners* to *All in the Family* to *Murphy Brown* to, yes, *Seinfeld*) have always let in a whiff of contemporary life to lend them an edge. If the success of *Friends* bears any true relationship to the twentysomethings who comprise its target audience, then what we have is a generation that wants desperately to stay out of touch with anything more crucial than the latest sale at Bloomingdale's.

And why not? In a world of shrinking opportunities and increasingly ruthless conduct—both in the business world and in personal life—perhaps the best any Gen-Xer (or baby-boomer, for that matter) hopes for is a place like the oversized playpen that houses the cast of *Friends*. Like its cinematic equivalent, Eddie Burns' extravagantly overpraised *The Brothers McMullen* (a film that owes far more to *thirtysomething* than it does to Burns' "inspiration," *Annie Hall*), *Friends* hints at the darkness behind its barbs only to quell any anxious thoughts with sentiment so patently hokey it evokes—what else?—a faint smirk or a nervous giggle. The strategy is tailor-made for an industry increasingly dependent (like film) on merchandising tie-ins and product endorsements. With nothing to look at but six perfectly beautiful characters, and not much else to think about but what they're wearing, the big question among viewers (besides whether Ross and Rachel will ever get together) is "Where can I get a haircut like that?" I guess it beats thinking about the future. ◀

Linda DeLibero is a freelance writer based in Baltimore.

Editorial

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mobile, now represents this unleashed spirit. And Democratic leaders, as traditional representatives of socially responsible big capital in coalition with labor, are in a quandary. Striving to corral all the big money by using American power, in the *Times'* words, "to win contracts for American business around the world," the White House still finds big business reluctant to give it full support. "It's incredible," a Clinton adviser told the *Times*, "They all tell us we've done a great job, understood their problems in a way Bush and Reagan never did. And yet the money goes to Newt."

From this, the *Times* concludes that "big business now looks like a constituency in search of a party—culturally alienated from the Democrats, perpetually frustrated by the Republicans." But that puts it backward. The real problem is that big business is a very small constituency. Its power rests on money, not numbers, and in a democracy, or at least in elections, numbers are what matter. To win elections, the Republicans must appeal to a popular base of small business, the culturally disaffected and the many thousands of involuntary entrepreneurs created by layoffs in recent years. And the Democrats must appeal to their traditional popular base of workers, minorities and the poor. Clinton wants to become the candidate of big business, but when elections roll around even he has to return to the popular base he has abandoned. The question is: Has he gone too far in courting big business to win back his base in 1996? ◀

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IN THE END

Up the sandbox

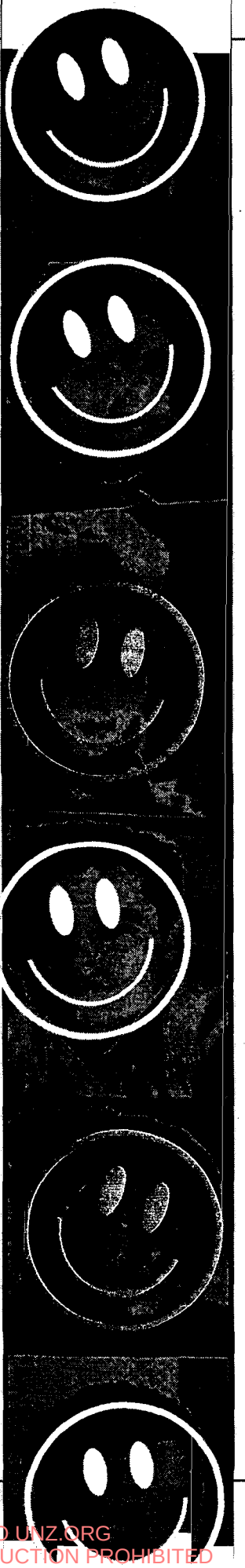
By Linda DeLibero

Ever since NBC's Gen-X sitcom *Friends* toppled the hoary *Seinfeld* (that guy in his 30s) from its No. 1 spot in the network ratings this summer, TV pundits and executives alike have been scrambling to frame the event as a Major Moment in Television History. "In the beginning we were called the Gen-X *Seinfeld*. Now we're the show that everyone else is compared to," crowed *Friends* producer Kevin Bright in a recent *TV Guide*. Behind the boast, of course, lies the implication that the triumph of *Friends* signifies nothing less than the death of baby-boomer culture itself, an end to 20-odd years of hegemony over our country's pop culture heritage and, more important, the pop culture revenues. "In simple dollars and cents," explains one network executive, "the younger demographic brings in more money—period. To ignore that is stupid."

No danger there. The *Friends* frenzy has already spawned a fall season crammed with nubile, coffee-guzzling college grads; it's like one long animated Gap ad. The show itself—which chronicles the antics and heartbreaks of a group of deeply uninteresting twentysomethings—is about to launch the sort of merchandising campaign (T-shirts, mugs, caps, soundtrack album) usually reserved for the stuff your kids watch, like *Barney*. And after being treated to a summer of AT&T commercials featuring a charmingly addled David ("Ross") Schwimmer, the public can probably expect corporate endorsements for the five other cast members.

Dollars and cents aside, the critical buzz on *Friends* has been very, well, friendly. Adjectives like "fresh" and "innovative" pepper the reviews, which usually focus on the characters' "witty on-camera rapport" (*TV Guide*) and "high energy" (*Hartford Courant*), and which also make much of the fact that the stars really *are* friends with each other *in real life*.

Real is a concept that comes up often among the critics, the network people and the players themselves when they're talking about the show. "I've got a group of friends just like this!" chirps Courtney Cox, who plays the fresh-scrubbed Monica, in the *TV Guide* interview. "The one thing I'm determined to have Ross share with me and the one thing that I pride myself on is my fierce, fierce loyalty to my friends," Schwimmer says. And viewers of *Friends* have developed a "fierce, fierce loyalty" to the show, in large part because they, too, have "friends like this." "The show 'Friends' perfectly describes the night," is how a guest characterized a wedding recently chronicled in the Sunday *New York Times* "Vows" column. The groom of said wedding—a 35-year-old Armani-clad banker—had already compared himself and his friends to the cast of *Friends*. Apparently you don't have to be *Friends*-like (young and broke) to identify with the *Friends* crew. "What is most interesting about" the show, says Matthew Perry, who plays the acerbic Chandler, "is that it's just six people, six different kinds of characters, who just walk into a room and talk to each other."



Indeed, if critics once complained that *Seinfeld* was a show "about nothing," *Friends* makes its ousted predecessor look more action-packed than a Steven Seagal movie. In fact, pick apart the show's mechanics, and what you have is a concept so simple, so static, that it can only seem real to someone who's watched far too much television. The core characters can be boiled down to stereotypes familiar to any media junkie: Monica, the perky, anal-retentive priss (*That Girl* fans, take note); Joey, the dimwitted would-be actor (Tony Danza with grooming); Ross, the bumbling, sensitive guy (Woody Allen's assimilated grandson); Rachel, the riches-to-rags waitress (Private Benjamin sans fatigues); Chandler, the WASPy smart-ass (Alex Keaton of *Family Ties* all grown up); Phoebe, the hippy-dippy wise child (Alex's sister all grown up). Plot, such as it is, happens when these stereotypes get together and, well, do friend-like things together, like eat and shop.

The setting is equally barebones. Much has been made of the fact that *Friends* is set in New

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